The Arts of the Church

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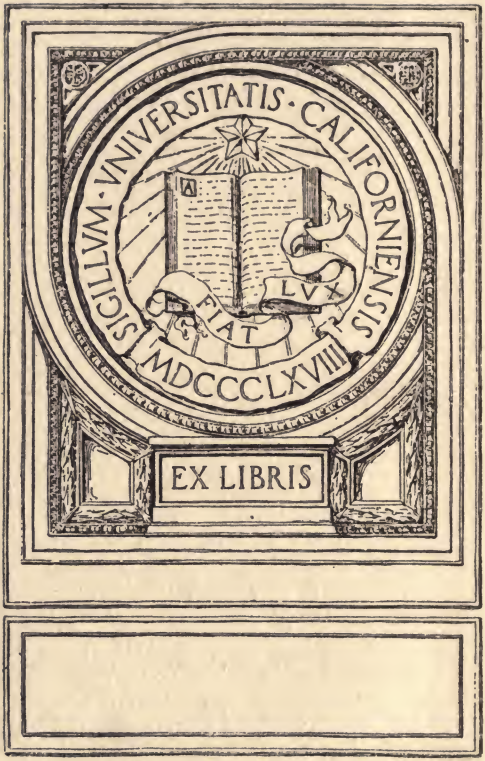
The Chancel and the Altar

By Harold C. King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TOTNES, DEVON: CHANCEL WITH NO CHANCEL ARCH, AND STONE SCREEN.

The Arts of the Church

THE CHANCEL AND THE ALTAR

BY

HAROLD C. KING, M.A.

WITH A PREFACE BY

PERCY DEARMER, M.A.

WITH FORTY-EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS

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EDITOR'S NOTE

THE little volumes in the ARTS OF THE CHURCH series are intended to provide information in an interesting as well as an accurate form about the various arts which have clustered round the public worship of God in the Church of Christ. Though few have the opportunity of knowing much about them, there are many who would like to possess the main outlines about those arts whose productions are so familiar to the Christian, and so dear. The authors will write for the average intelligent man who has not had the time to study all these matters for himself; and they will therefore avoid technicalities, while endeavouring at the same time to present the facts with a fidelity which will not, it is hoped, be unacceptable to the specialist.

PREFACE

THE subject of the present volume, *The Chancel and the Altar*, is one about which very practical and detailed information is required, for it is one about which disastrous mistakes have been made in the past. It is indeed difficult to say which of the types of altars with which we are familiar have been the worst—the pagan monstrosities of the Continental Renaissance, the bald and worldly furniture of Hanoverian England, or the mean and ugly substitutes which came in with the Gothic revival. All at least have been remote from the refined dignity, the reverent mystery, the loving richness, which characterized the Christian altar, through many changes of architectural styles, for the first fifteen or sixteen centuries of the Christian era. The

results of our ignorance, carelessness, and want of reverent imagination are, alas! spread over the whole of Christendom; and it is still far from easy to find a church with an east end which can be set up as a model for imitation.

The only remedy is to graft ourselves on to the old Christian tradition, and for this a careful regard to detail is required. No true artist, of course, desires the mere copying of old work, or the mechanical reproduction of ornament from which the heart vanishes in the imitation; but still less does he desire the sham Gothic of the Church furnisher which is not even imitation, but is worlds away from the originals, not only in the detail of ornament, but even in the broadest matters of size and proportion. Yet it is this last from which hardly a church in the country is free to-day.

We must escape, then, from this mere vulgar commercialism which is not even a good imitation of Gothic art—we must

escape, but without falling into a mere frozen habit of correct reproduction.

And in order to obtain this freedom, and to be able safely to use it, we need to recover among ourselves—among architects and craftsmen, among the clergy, and among Churchmen as a whole—the tradition of the Christian altar and its surroundings, the tradition as it was before Paganism came in to corrupt and Puritanism to destroy it. It is useless for architects, however gifted, to attempt improvements unless they understand first of all what the Christian altar is, and how it should be arranged. Many attempts have been made without this knowledge, and they are themselves sufficient evidence that even small departures from the old canons produce gauntness without dignity, and strangeness without beauty.

Therefore the author of this book, writing as an architect as well as a student, has wisely made it practical, so that every detail can be worked out by a craftsman,

and understood by the intelligent layman. With the spread of knowledge such as is here outlined, it will be possible for a school of architects to arise who, in co-operation with the sound craftsmen that are steadily increasing in our midst, will be able to recover the ancient beauty of our priceless English churches, and to build and furnish new ones not altogether unworthy of the heritage which our fore-fathers have left us.

In the meantime, those who are responsible for our churches can, in many simple ways, and with very little cost, gradually remove the lumber of ugliness, and make our chancels more worthy of the God who has surrounded man with natural loveliness in order that we may know His mind.

PERCY DEARMER.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE author desires to acknowledge his indebtedness to the many excellent works of others; and also to express his appreciation of the kindness of several friends who have assisted by giving useful information and valuable criticism.

For the illustrations similar acknowledgment is due. Mr. Cyril Ellis and Mr. Moorhouse have supplied several excellent photographs; Messrs. Macmillan have consented to the reproduction of Plates 1, 30, and 31 from Mr. Lowrie's *Christian Art and Archæology*; The Alcuin Club's Collection II (Rev. W. H. Frere) has furnished Plates 28 and 29; Mr. J. G. Commin, of Exeter, has also given permission for the use of a plate from *Devon*

and Cornwall Notes and Queries; and others have kindly placed photographs at the author's disposal.

H. C. K.

2 Dean's Yard,
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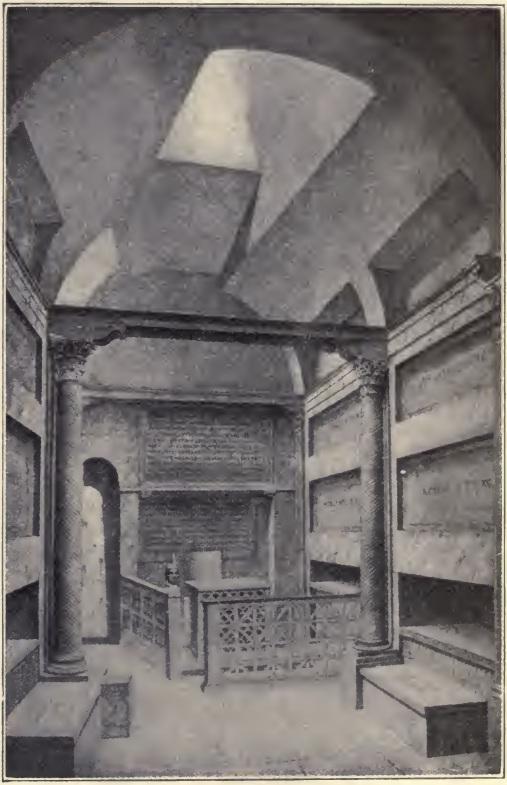


CATACOMB OF CALLISTUS, RESTORED AS IT WAS IN THE FOURTH CENTURY.

The Arts of the Church

THE CHANCEL AND THE ALTAR

CHAPTER I

Definition

A CHANCEL is that portion of a church set apart for the clergy in which they may perform their ministrations at divine worship. The word is derived from the Latin *cancellus*, which means a lattice-screen. Our word "cancel" has the same origin; we cancel a paragraph by drawing lattice-like lines across it. A "chancellor," also, is another example of the use of the word; he was so named because he was the legal officer who sat by the screen of the law court.

It was the *cancellus*, marking off the portion of the church allotted to the clergy from that occupied by the laity, which afterwards gave the name to the part itself.

This division of the church into two main portions is only the following out of the Apostolic precept of letting everything be done decently and in order. It is a natural arrangement, and purely a matter of convenience. But at the same time it is a close parallel to the organization of the Christian society. The Church or *Ecclesia* is a society called out (as the word *ecclesia* means), or set apart from the rest of the world for a special purpose ; so, in like manner, the Church building is a building set apart from other buildings for a special purpose ; and it would be against Christian sentiment to use it for secular purposes. Similarly, in the society itself, certain of the members are set apart for the performance of the ministerial functions in the Church. Again, the parallel is followed in the arrangement

of the building—a special part of it is set apart in which these ministers may perform their offices. Furthermore, as the Christian religion culminates in the Sacrifice of the Cross, so also do the administrations of the clergy centre around the altar, for which the chancel is mainly provided.

A church, then, comprises two parts—the nave (with its aisles) for the laity, and the chancel for the clergy. The proper designation of these two portions should be the church and the sanctuary, the church being in strictness limited to the body of the building. The use of the word in this limited sense may be seen in the first rubric of the Book of Common Prayer, where it is directed that "the Morning and Evening Prayer shall be used in the accustomed place of the Church, Chapel, or Chancel." The Sanctuary is the place of the altar, and consequently the place of those who minister at the altar.

These are the two primal divisions of

the building, but there is another portion which has risen to no little importance—that is to say, the choir. So important has the choir become that the two divisions of the church are often spoken of as the nave and the choir. But the choir is not essential to the church : some of the early basilican churches had no choir, and not a few of our mediæval parish churches were without one. It was only in some of the basilicas and mediæval churches that any such provision was made. At the present time, however, no modern church, however small, would be regarded as complete without some space being allotted for the purpose of a choir.

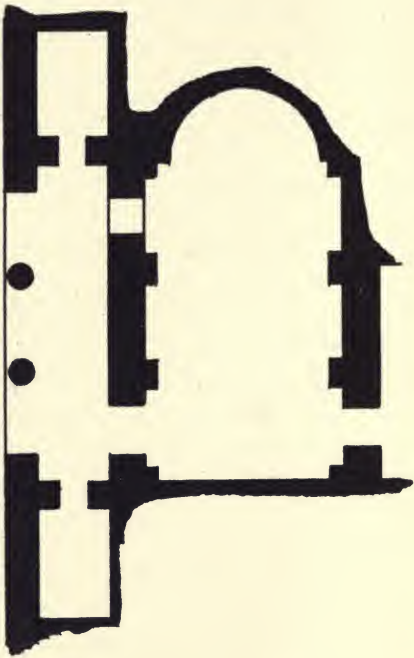
The position of the choir will be discussed later, but, for the present, it may be generally stated that, in the parish churches of Western Christendom, the chancel includes the choir as well as the sanctuary.

CHAPTER II

The Plan

Basilicas

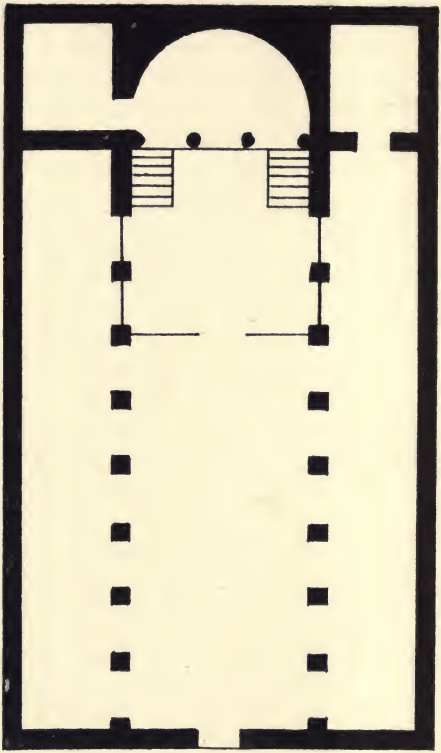
THE earliest churches are known as Christian basilicas, so called from their resemblance to the civil basilicas. These latter were public halls adjoining the market-place, where merchants met for business purposes, and where the courts of law were held. The simplest form of the Christian basilicas consisted of a building or nave oblong in plan, with the length about three or four times the width. In the larger buildings, where the width of the building was too great to be spanned by a single roof, the increased dimension was obtained by the addition of an aisle, or sometimes of two aisles on each side. The walls of the nave or



SURP GARABED, CAPPADOCIA (a Third-Century Rock Church showing simple Apse. See page 7.)

centre portion were carried on columns or piers, and were taken to a sufficient height to permit the insertion of windows in the clerestory above the aisle roofs. In these buildings the chancel or presbytery consisted of a semicircular extension at the end of the nave (Plate 2) and of about the same width. Usually this was at the eastern end ; but many exceptions to the general rule might be given. It was roofed over with a semi-dome. This apse, as it is called, was open to the nave, the opening being arched with a semicircular arch. The apse, therefore, formed virtually a large niche in the east wall. The end walls of the aisles flanking the arch were in these simple plans left square.

Although this rudimentary plan formed a common type, yet there are many modifications and variations from it. For example, in Coptic churches, and in the basilicas of Syria and Northern Africa, there are chambers flanking the apse

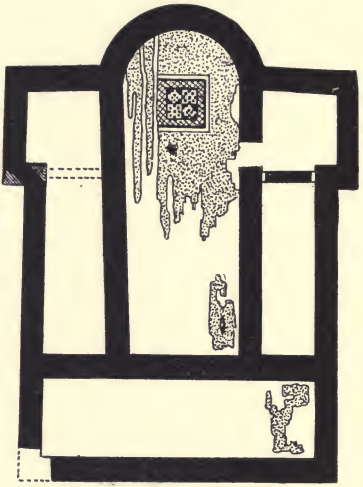


BENIAN, ALGERIA: BASILICA OF THE FIFTH CENTURY (showing Apse with colonnaded Screen, flanking Chambers, and Choir with Screens. See page 9).

(Plate 3). One of these, called the prothesis, was intended to receive the offerings of the faithful. The other, the diaconicon or vestry, was used for the vesting of the clergy, and as a sacristy where the sacred vessels were kept. In it also the Holy Scriptures were kept; for this reason, therefore, it was open to any of the members of the congregation who wished to read the sacred writings.

Another modification of the original type was the addition of a small apse to the end of each of the aisles. These were used for the purpose of providing smaller sanctuaries for minor altars.

In Italy, although there are later examples of similar arrangements, they were not general. But in that country is found—what is rare in the East and in Africa—the transept (Plate 12). This was interposed between the nave and aisles and the apsidal sanctuary; it was intended to provide additional accommodation for the clergy. In width it was about equal to



SILCHESTER. (See page 11.)

that of the nave, and it extended the full width of the church across to the outer walls of the aisles. Occasionally it extended somewhat beyond them, thus producing the cruciform plan which afterwards became so common in the churches of mediæval times. Where the transept-wall crossed the nave, there was an arch like that of the apse. This was called the triumphal arch, although the opening into the apse was sometimes designated by the same term.

But in all these plans the semicircular apse remained constant. Sometimes its outer-wall-face, instead of being circular, was polygonal in plan ; and sometimes, as in Coptic churches, it was rectangular externally.

English Basilicas

An example of a small early basilican church of the fourth century may be seen in the old Roman village of Silchester

in Hampshire ; but only the foundations remain. The plan follows the African and Eastern arrangement rather than the Roman. It has the apsidal sanctuary, with two flanking chambers, that on the right hand being partitioned off from the aisle, but having a doorway opening into the nave : this chamber was probably used as the diaconicon ; the other is open to the aisle, but has no corresponding doorway, and was probably the prothesis.

The walls of these chambers project beyond the side walls of the aisles, and it has been suggested that the extensions indicate a rudimentary transept. If this be the case, then the origin of the church is Roman rather than Eastern or African, since the transept is rare in the examples of the latter, but common in Italy. But a comparison of the plan with an Italian basilica possessing a transept will show that the arrangements are different, and that the projecting limbs were merely introduced in order to enlarge what other-

Photo] [*Addington & Philp, Northampton.*

BRIXWORTH, NORTHAMPTON. (See page 32.)

wise would have been but exceedingly small chambers.

Anglo-Saxon Churches

The Saxons were largely converted to Christianity by Celtic missionaries. In Scotland and Ireland the Celtic churches were rude oblong constructions, built of rough stone walling. More often than not they had no structural chancels, and the buildings were nothing more than mere sheds. These buildings the Celtic missionaries reproduced in England. S. Piran's Church, at Perranzabuloe, in Cornwall, was one of such churches; it has no chancel, but consists of a nave 25 feet long and 12 feet wide. The altar was at the east end of the church.

Where stone was not readily obtained, the churches were built of timber, after the plan of these simple stone buildings. In fact, it is certain that nearly all the early Saxon churches were built of timber,

since the Saxons were not accustomed to erecting stone buildings. But, when the people came more in touch with the civilized world, they gradually learnt the art of building with a material more lasting than wood. Bede, for instance, tells us that Benedict Biscop went to Gaul and Rome on behalf of the church which he built.

In Saxon planning, therefore, we find two influences at work—the one Celtic and the other foreign. The former influence produced the square-ended chancel, which lent itself better to timber construction, or, where stone was the material used, was more easily erected by inexpert masons. The foreign influence showed itself in the apsidal sanctuary. Thus it is that usually the larger churches have the apse, and smaller buildings in out-of-the way places have the square-ended chancel. But, in the long run, the rectangular building prevailed in England, and became the almost universal type of chancel;

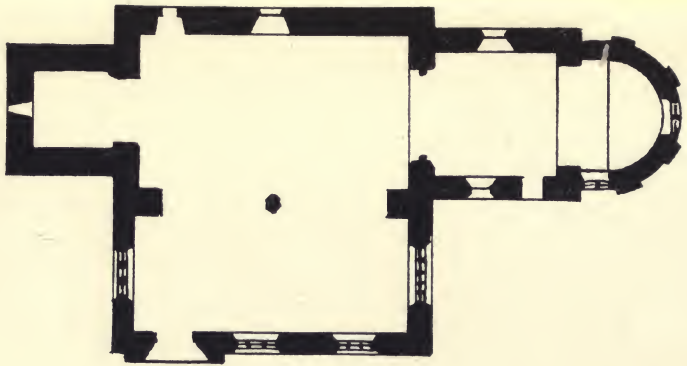
while the apsidal termination was the predominant form on the Continent.

Norman Churches

In the churches of Normandy the apse is the common form of the sanctuary. But, in the Norman work in England, although there are not a few examples of the apsidal end, the strong local influence in favour of the square chancel remained. In the smaller churches, as in the case of the Saxon buildings, the square end predominated ; but, in the cathedrals and larger churches and abbeys, the Continental plan was adopted, and we find that the apse was the almost general rule.

Gothic Buildings

The preference for the rectangular chancel was firmly rooted in this country by the time the Gothic era was reached. The eastern limb of our parish churches was almost invariably built according to the

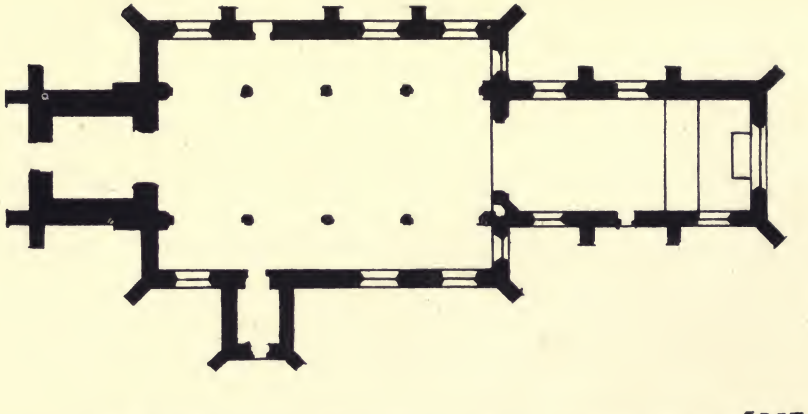


BIRKIN, YORKS.: NORMAN CHURCH WITH CHOIR AND APSIDAL SANCTUARY. (See page 16.)

same plan. In this respect, our English churches differ in plan from those on the Continent, where the apsidal termination remained constant. But, in some of our cathedrals and abbeys, and in one or two parish churches, the foreign influence is seen by the adoption of this semicircular or polygonal end to the sanctuary.

The Enlargement of the Chancel

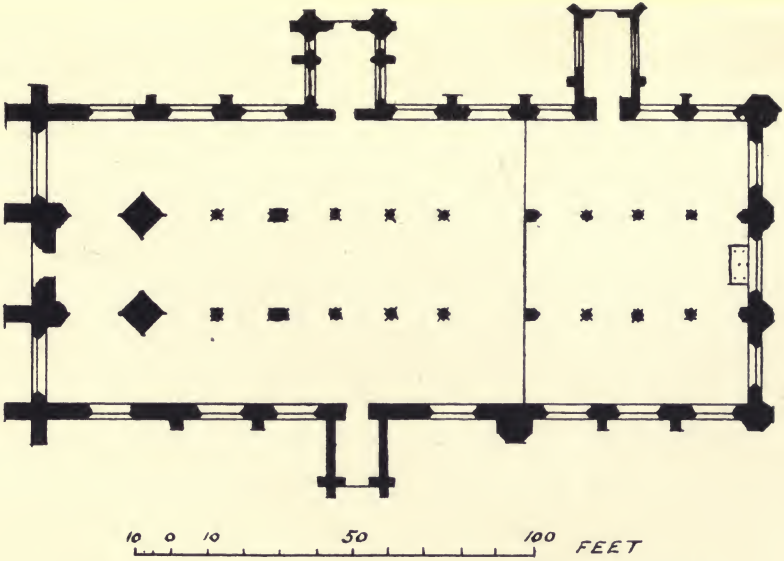
The simplest plan of the sanctuary or chancel was either an apse or a rectangular addition to the church. But, as the nave had been supplemented by the addition of aisles to meet growing requirements, so the chancel received similar treatment. While the ceremonial of the early Church was comparatively simple, the apse provided sufficient room for the ministers. But, with the development of a more elaborate ceremonial, the simple semicircular apse was found to be inconveniently small, especially in basilicas with comparatively



EAST MARKHAM: SQUARE ENDED CHANCEL. (See page 16.)

narrow naves. To meet these requirements in Rome a transept was interposed between the nave and apse. In Northern Africa and in Syria the apse was often extended by throwing it a little further out from the nave and connecting it to the main building by two parallel walls. Thus its plan became an elongated semicircle. This arrangement may be seen in some of the Saxon churches, where a semicircular apse would have been exceedingly small because of the narrowness of the nave. The development of this type of plan reached its highest stage in some of the cathedrals, where the apse almost disappeared, and only remained as a termination to an oblong eastern limb.

But the enlargement of the eastern limb did not stop here. In the same way that aisles had been added to the nave so also were the chancels supplemented by them. Sometimes one aisle only was added; sometimes two. As a rule they extended only a part of the length of the chancel



GRANTHAM CHANCEL WITH LONG CHANCEL AISLES. (See page 22.)

Plate 8.

(Plate 16), but in some of the mediæval buildings, especially the later examples, they were carried to the full length (Plate 8). In the cathedral, abbey, and collegiate churches, the aisles often returned around the eastern end, thus forming an ambulatory. These chancel aisles, strictly speaking, do not form a part of the chancel, although the walls between them are open and arcaded similarly to the nave arcades. They were intended to provide accommodation for the large number of minor altars required in the Middle Ages. The origin of these chancel aisles may be traced to the diaconicon and prothesis of the Eastern and African basilicas.

There were many varieties of treatment in the plan into which it is impossible to enter, but we have, perhaps, said enough to give a general idea of the usual planning of the chancel.

TOTNES, DEVON: EXTERIOR.

CHAPTER III

Screens

Basilican

IN the secular basilicas, to which reference has already been made, the floor of the tribune, or of the apse, when there was one, was raised above the general level. Some protection was therefore needed at the edge of the platform. This was provided by means of a railing; but as something more was required than mere protection, since the apse was used for the purpose of a law court, the railing took the form of a lattice screen.

Whether or not the Church modelled its sanctuary on this feature of the secular basilicas (although the use of the apse was not limited to the basilicas), this semicircular extension certainly fulfilled the requirements of the church, as a place for

the altar and the clergy. As in the civil basilica, the floor of the apse was raised ; no doubt, in order that the clergy might be the better heard, and also that the faithful might the better see what was being done. But the view was to be a restricted one ; for a Church which called its chief service by the name of the " Holy Mysteries " would naturally be desirous of impressing the idea of a mystery by means of the senses. The protective railing therefore became, as it did in the civil basilicas, a screen.

In the West this screen was usually a low one ; but in the East and in the Coptic churches it was not only of a more solid nature, but was also loftier. Often it consisted of a stone wall with openings, which were closed by means of doors or hangings during the more solemn parts of the service. This arrangement and practice is universal in those most conservative of Churches, the Eastern Orthodox and the Nestorian.

S. CLEMENT'S, ROME. (See page 27.)

These screens afforded great opportunities for craftmanship, and the architects were not slow to avail themselves of them. Eusebius, the Bishop of Cæsarea, in his description of the church built at Tyre by the Emperor Constantine, at the consecration of which he preached, says, "This (viz. the sanctuary) again, that it might be inaccessible to the multitude, he surrounded with wooden lattices, perfectly finished with the most cunning workmanship, so that the sight presented to the beholders was admirable indeed." The screen erected in the Church of the Apostles at Constantinople, also built by Constantine, was a "reticulated screen of gilded bronze."

None of these early fourth-century screens remain, but something of their nature may be seen from the marble screens of later periods, dating from the sixth century, as, for example, those at S. Clement's, Rome (Plate 10).

A colonnade or row of four, six, or

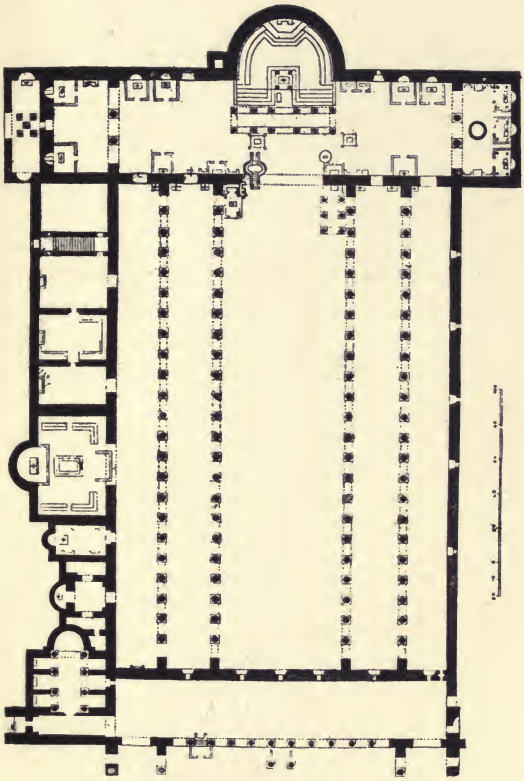
twelve columns, was another form of screen adopted. The columns were either built on low parapet walls, as was probably the case in the old church of S. Peter at Rome (Plate 12); or else, as at Torcello Cathedral (Plate 11), the spaces between the columns were filled in with low screens. An entablature surmounted the columns, and linked them together.

In the basilica at Jerusalem, which was built by Constantine, who intended it to be the finest in the world, we are told by Eusebius that the "apse" was "surrounded" by twelve columns, equal in number to the Apostles, and adorned on their summits with great bowls of silver. The actual position of these columns cannot be accurately determined from Eusebius's description; but, since we find colonnades used as screens at a later date, it is highly probable that this was their use here. It would not be surprising, moreover, if an arrangement adopted in the finest of the Constantinian basilicas,

TORCELLO: INTERIOR OF CHURCH. (See page 28.)

which had been erected within a few feet of the site of the Resurrection and was made familiar by the visits of many pilgrims, should have been copied elsewhere.

But there may have been another reason than mere sentiment in adopting the colonnade as a screen. It became the practice to insert a beam upon which was fixed a cross ; or in much later times a crucifix, with the attendant figures of S. Mary and S. John. In the larger churches where the span was great some intermediate support was needed for this rood beam ; this the columns provided. We know that there was a rood beam plated with silver in S. Peter's, at Rome, in the eighth century. In the Coptic churches the rood beam was rare ; but the solid screens were generally adorned with paintings, of which the Crucifixion formed the subject for the central panel over the doorway. It is, however, quite possible that it was the entablature of the colonnade



OLD S. PETER'S, ROME. (See page 28.)

which suggested the introduction of the rood, rather than *vice versa*.

Anglo-Saxon

The triple chancel arches in the early Anglo-Saxon churches are thought to be an adaptation of the colonnaded screen. At Reculver in Kent, S. Pancras at Canterbury, and again at Rochester, columns were actually used for the two middle supports; but elsewhere piers take the place of the columns. The later Anglo-Saxon churches have single chancel arches; but the idea of a screen is to be seen in the fact that these arches instead of being almost the full width of the chancel, like the apsidal arches of the basilica, were comparatively narrow (Plate 5). Sometimes they were mere doorways, in which case the eastern wall of the nave was almost solid, and corresponded with the Iconostasis of the Eastern churches, as at Bradford-on-Avon. Whether the reasons suggested are correct

OVINGDEAN, SUSSEX: NORMAN CHANCEL. (See page 34.)

it is impossible to say. It is, however, not improbable that the narrow opening was due to the inability of our Saxon forefathers to construct an arch of great span.

Mediæval

In the early churches of the mediæval period the chancel arches still remained comparatively narrow. In the small Norman church at Ovingdean, near Brighton (Plate 13), the width of the opening is only 6 feet, although the chancel itself is 15 feet wide. Often a small window-like opening or squint was pierced in the solid wall on either side of the arch, similar to those at Ovingdean, but here the squints are of a later date than the other work. Generally the chancel openings were much wider than this, although relatively to the width of the chancel they were narrow. The object of this, it has been suggested, was to provide space on either side of the opening for additional

Photo] [*Cyril Ellis.*

S. CHAD'S, STAFFORD: NORMAN CHANCEL ARCH.

altars in the nave. Examples of these small altars in the nave may be seen at Patricio, in Wales (Plate 15). In the aisled churches this contraction of the opening was unnecessary, since the eastern end of the aisles afforded the accommodation for the extra altars.

At a later period the chancel arch increased in size, until it became almost of the same width as the chancel; and then it disappeared altogether in some of the fifteenth-century churches, especially in East-Anglia and generally throughout the south-west of England.

With the gradual widening of the chancel arch, and its occasional disappearance, the chancel structurally became more and more open to the nave, and we are brought back again to the conditions which prevailed in the basilicas. Something else, therefore, was needed to mark the distinction between the two divisions of the church. This need was again met by the development of a screen, though of a less

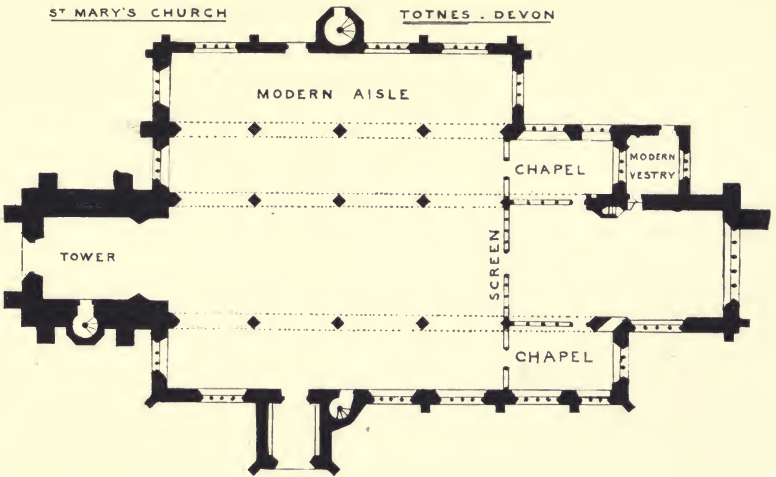
Photo] [*Cyril Ellis.*

PATRICIO, WALES: SCREEN AND STONE ALTAR IN THE NAVE. (See page 36.)

structural character. Thus it is that we have those fine examples of rich workmanship of a lighter and more delicate nature than would have been possible in the work of a more constructional nature.

The screens were generally erected across the nave under the chancel arch; and, where the chancel was aisled, similar screens divided the nave aisles from those of the chancel. In those churches where there was no chancel arch, and the chancel was but a continuation of the nave, the screens were carried right across the church from the external wall of the north aisle to that of the south aisle. Examples are also to be found where the central screen returns westwards under the north and south nave arcades, and is then carried northwards and southwards to the external walls of the aisles. This was done to enclose the eastern ends of the nave aisles where there were no chancel aisles, as it was here that the minor altars were placed.

A few of these screens were erected of



TOTNES. (See page 23.)

stonework, taking the form of a light arcade, and finished with a cornice. Examples may be seen at Bottisham, near Cambridge, and at Bramford, Suffolk. Others, such as those at Great Bardfield and Stebbing, fill the whole of the opening of the chancel, and are not unlike large unglazed windows.

But the great majority of screens are of a still lighter nature, being constructed of oak. They appear to be a development of the colonnaded screen, which, as we have seen, was not uncommon in the basilicas, but their elaboration was Gothic in style instead of Classical. They were constructed of vertical posts, framed at the bottom into a floor-sill, and supporting at the top a horizontal beam. A few feet above the floor level is the transome, another horizontal timber which forms the top rail to the lower portion of the screen. All these constructional timbers are most delicately moulded and painted, and very often enriched with niches and carving.

The lower portion of the screen is filled in with solid panelling and with tracery; and in the more elaborate screens the panels are either painted with figures of the saints or are provided with niches for images. The upper portion above the intermediate rail is open, but filled with light mullions and open traceried heads. The top beam in many cases is hidden by a deep overhanging cornice, very richly and elaborately moulded and carved. The underside of the heavy projecting cornice is coved, and enriched with moulded ribs; but very often this coving takes the form of, what may be described as, fan-traceried vaulting executed in woodwork.

Nearly all these screens were at one time furnished with lofts or platforms about six or seven feet wide. These necessitated protecting fronts, which were enriched so as to be in keeping with the lower screens. Unfortunately a very large majority of these lofts were removed at the time of the Reformation; but a few

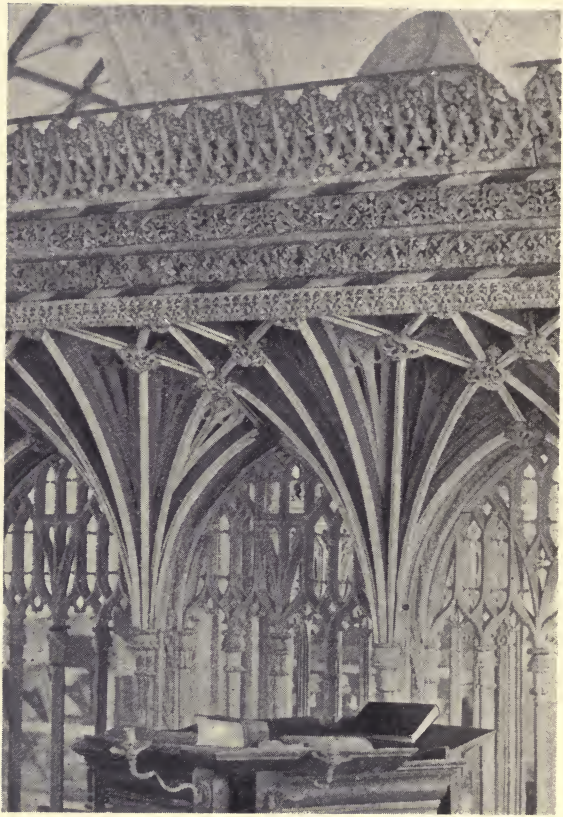
Photo] *[Cyril Ellis.*

BOVEY TRACEY, DEVON. (See page 40.)

Plate 17.

ancient examples remain (Plate 19). The lofts were approached by a staircase of stone built in the wall, or by stairs of woodwork. Many of the old stone stairway openings remain, even where the loft and the screen have long since disappeared. The screen, or its gallery, provided a place for the rood, which was a crucifix with the attendant figures of our Lady and S. John. But the rood was not always placed on the screen: it sometimes stood on a separate beam, or "perk," which was provided for the purpose. Other figures such as angels, as well as lights and other decorations, were also placed on the screen or loft.

The finest examples of these screens are to be found in Devon and Somerset, and (of another type) in the opposite part of the country in East Anglia. Some good examples (of yet different types) may also be seen in Wales and elsewhere. It is impossible to do justice to the beauty of the screens in any description. To see



Photo] [*Cyril Ellis.*

DETAIL OF SCREEN AT CHAWLEIGH, DEVON.
(See page 41.)

them is to appreciate them, and to realize the wonderful effect that they have from an architectural point of view. Many of the simple fifteenth-century churches in the West of England are "made" by their beautiful screens. Far from shortening the church in appearance, as is sometimes supposed, they really in effect seem to add to its length.

Although there are some examples of thirteenth and fourteenth-century screens, the majority remaining to us belong to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. But screen building did not cease at the Reformation, for there are many fine examples which were erected during the seventeenth century. A few also were erected during the century following. It cannot, therefore, be said that the practice ever died out. When the Prayer Book tells us that "the chancels shall remain as they have done in times past," it clearly intends that the chancel should have a screen, for "in times past" (i.e. before

Photo] [*Cyril Ellis.*

MONTGOMERY. (See page 43.)

1552) they were almost universal, and the practice never fell into desuetude. Many a modern church would be greatly improved by the addition of a screen. There seems, however, to be the impression that a screen is illegal; but such is not the case, since screens were never ordered to be removed. In the Visitation Articles of the seventeenth century the question is often asked, "Is there a comely partition betwixt your chancel and the body of the church as is required by the law?"

We have seen that screens were in use in primitive times, so that, if there be any dioceses where the chancellors have decided against their introduction, it can only be said that screens are "primitive and ordered by the Prayer Book, but are illegal." But few chancellors (if any) would nowadays refuse to grant a faculty for the erection of a screen; and few churches would be without one if only congregations could be taught to appreciate their value.

Photo] *[Cyril Ellis.*

INGESTRE. (See page 45.)

Plate 20.

CHAPTER IV

The Choir and Stalls

The Choir

THE screen marks the boundary between the nave and the chancel. Immediately within the screen of the ordinary parish church is that portion of the chancel known as the choir. But it was not always so, for in the early basilicas the apse was the sanctuary. When accommodation was required for a choir it was provided by placing the "choir" westwards of the screen in the easternmost bay or bays of the nave. There was no separate architectural division of the building. The choir was merely a part of the nave, as at S. Clement's, Rome (Plate 10). These "choirs" were enclosed by low screens

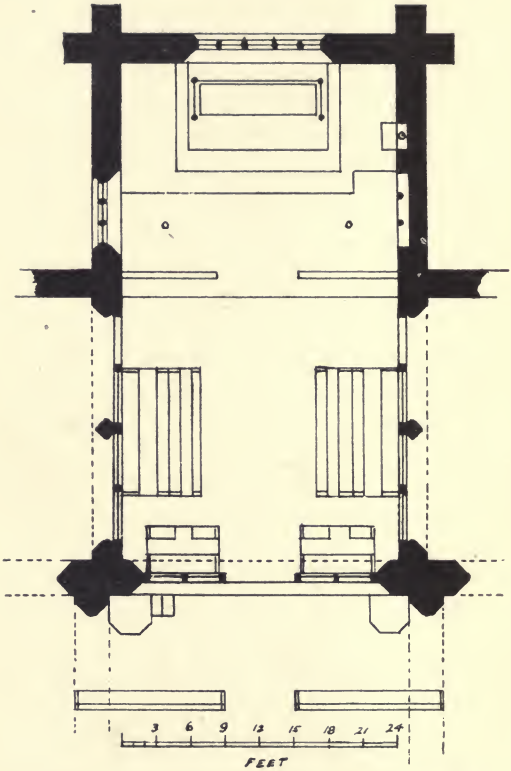
similar to the original low screens of the sanctuary. Thus there were two screens, the one enclosing the "choir" in the nave, and the other dividing the sanctuary from that part of the nave occupied by the choir. Of the two, the latter was by far the more marked, especially in the East, where it was more solid and lofty.

This arrangement continued in the East. But in the West, about the ninth century, the practice began of interposing a choir between the nave and the sanctuary. Occasionally it formed a separate architectural division of the church, as at Birkin (Plate 6); but more often the sanctuary was thrown out eastwards, and the "choir" inserted between that and the nave. This arrangement became the usual one in ordinary parish churches. Thus the "choir" was transferred from the nave to the chancel, and was located within instead of without the screen. The greater line of demarcation was then between the choir and the nave rather than between

the sanctuary and the choir, as in the basilica and in the Eastern churches. Custom has now definitely fixed this arrangement in the West ; it has been the growth of centuries, and, on the whole, it is a most convenient plan.

The Levels

Another distinction between the chancel and the nave is the difference often made in the floor-levels. The chancel paving is usually raised a step or two above the level of the nave. The amount of the difference in levels depended very largely on the size of the building, but it never used to be very great, excepting when there was a crypt below. In some of our modern churches this has been carried to great excess, and the proportions of the chancel have suffered largely in consequence. As a rule a difference in level of from five to fifteen inches will be found quite sufficient to meet ordinary requirements. The step



SUGGESTED PLAN OF CHANCEL SHOWING GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS.

which this raising of levels necessitates should be placed at the entrance doorway of the screen ; and the additional step or steps should be set in front of that in the nave, and should not be recessed in the floor of the choir. The usual rise given to a step in a church is about six inches, but it would be far more convenient if this were reduced to five inches. Any one accustomed to wearing a long garment like an albe would appreciate this reduction.

For liturgical purposes, as well as for practical reasons, it is advisable to have plenty of space between these chancel steps and the front benches of the nave seats. It is here that " stations " are made in processions ; and when the Litany is said or sung in the body of the church, instead of being sung in procession, the faldstool, or Litany desk, should be placed in front of the entrance to the choir.

Choir Stalls

Mediæval Period

It must not be imagined that the "choir" was simply provided for the singers—it was the place for the clergy who were not officiating at the altar, and for those in minor orders. In the monastic and collegiate churches the members of the Order sat here. It was here also that the additional daily services were said or sung ; and for this reason they became known as the choir services or offices. The larger parish churches, in due course, more or less modelled their services on the lines of the monastic and cathedral churches, and so choirs became necessary. Provision, therefore, had to be made for the clergy and ministers in the way of seats or stalls. This was done by placing against the north and south walls rows of stalls running east and west, so that the occupants faced north and south. But the higher dignitaries often sat facing

LUDLOW: LOOKING WEST. (See page 56.)

Plate 22.

eastwards, in what are known as "returned stalls"—that is to say, stalls that return at the western end, which extended to the opening in the screen (Plate 22). This is the usual arrangement in cathedral and monastic churches, as well as in the college chapels of our universities. In the back rows, as well as in their returns, the seats were divided by means of arms or elbows, so that each stall was independent of its neighbour. The seat was also so arranged that it would lift up and fall back against the back of the stall ; when this was done there was disclosed to view a narrow ledge or bracket, which formed an upper seat, known as a *misericordia*. The object of the misericord was to afford relief to the occupant of the stall by giving some kind of support during the long periods of standing. Many of these misericords were quaintly carved (Plate 23, pp. 67, 81, 95, etc.). Above the back of the stall were sometimes traceried canopies of very rich design and elaborate workmanship. The

lower seats, for the inferior orders of ministers, consisted of continuous benches, unbroken in their length by any elbows, but terminating with carved bench-ends. The terminals or finials of these were nearly always richly carved with foliage and figures; and, from their general shape, they are commonly known by the term "poppy-head." The back of these seats formed book-rests for the occupants of the stalls behind.

Only the cathedral, monastic, and collegiate churches were able to fit up their choirs in this manner. Excepting in a few of the larger parish churches, canopied stalls were unknown, the ordinary parish church having to be content with something of a simpler nature. A plain bench was occasionally provided for the use of the choirboys.

The Reformation and Post-Reformation Periods.

In pre-Reformation days, the Mass was the people's service, and the choir services

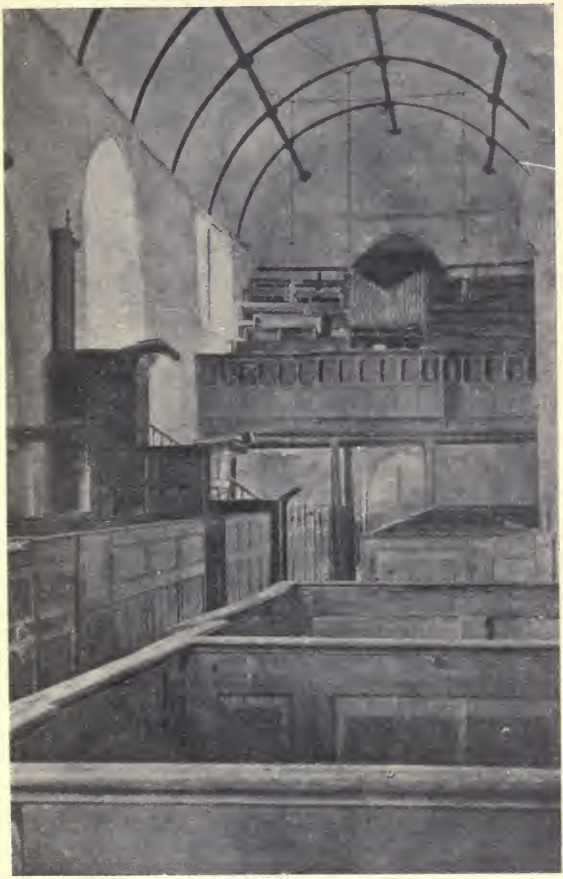
BALSHAM, CAMBS. (See page 56.)

mainly intended for the clergy and monks, although they were undoubtedly attended by the more devout laity. At the Reformation, when the eight choir offices were amalgamated into the two services of Mattins and Evensong, and were translated into the vernacular, it was thought advisable to make the system applicable to the laity, instead of being almost confined to the clergy. The Book of Common Prayer, however, contemplated no alteration in the general arrangements of the church in consequence. The chancels were ordered to remain as they had done in times past, and the Morning and Evening Prayer were to "be used in the accustomed place of the church, chapel, or chancel." Thus the old arrangements were to continue, but it was provided that should any controversy on the matter arise it was to be referred to the ordinary. Difficulties did arise; and, at a later period, during the dark ages of Puritanism and of the Hanoverian period, Morning Prayer

ousted the Lord's service from its proper place. The minister and the clerk were then brought from the choir and the altar to the nave, and a pulpit in three stages, popularly called a "three-decker," erected for their use (Plate 24). The lower tier of this erection was occupied by the clerk, from which he led the responses. The middle desk was used by the minister for the reading of the prayers, which were often regarded as the introductory setting to the more important sermon, and this was preached from the upper stage or pulpit. The chancel was filled with the wealthy laity. These altered arrangements were an intelligent adaptation of the church to the needs of the times; but the very fact that the alterations were needed shows clearly how contrary were those needs to the requirements of the Book of Common Prayer.

Modern Requirements

With the restoration of the Eucharist



BRANSCOMBE, DEVON: "THREE DECKER."

(See page 60.)

to its proper place in the services of the Church, the three-decker gradually disappeared. The congregation moved out of the chancel, and the clergy returned to their proper part of the church. Choral services became the rule, so that a place for the singers had to be provided. The seats for the choir naturally took their place against the north and south walls. But to provide for the requirements of the clergy was not quite so easy. In many churches this difficulty was met by placing the clergy in the westernmost stalls of the back rows of the choir seats. The objection to this is that it places the clergy behind the respond (the half-pier attached to the wall) of the chancel arch, and thus cuts them off from the nave. Acoustically this would be a good position, if only those in the choir were to be addressed ; but, as it is the congregation in the church that has now to be largely considered, it is a bad arrangement. Apart also from these practical reasons, it is bad liturgically ; for

it must be remembered that a priest is the representative of the people, and that he leads them in prayer and praise. The proper position for him, therefore, is not that he should occupy the neutral position of facing north (or south), but that he should face in the same direction as those whom he leads—that is to say, eastwards.

For these reasons, therefore, returned stalls at the western end of the choir would appear to be the more suitable position, since the priest then faces eastwards. In those parts of the service where the congregation have to be addressed, and not led, the minister has only then to turn round in order to face those to whom he speaks. The clergy also are there separated from the lay singers, thus marking the distinction between the clergy and the laity which has always prevailed in the Church. Nor should the architectural advantages be overlooked. In the first place, this arrangement enables

Photo] [*Cyril Ellis.*

EAST MARKHAM: CHANCEL.

the provision of easy access, both to the choir seats and to the clergy stalls. And, secondly, by breaking up the long continuous row of stalls into two shorter lengths, placed at right angles to one another much is gained æsthetically.

The stalls should be fixed on a raised wooden platform. The shuffling of the choirboys' feet on a tiled floor is very irritating to the other occupants of the choir. Although a strip of carpet would obviate this, it is open to the objection that it tends to deaden the sound of the voices (though this is not always an evil), and that it harbours dust, besides requiring more attention. The platform should be made of boards rather than of blocks, since in the former there is a hollow space beneath the boards, and the platform acts as a sounding-board, whereas a block floor is solid. The back platform for the men should be raised a step above the front row, in order to give more free space above the choirboys for the men's

voices. The clergy-stalls should be on the same level as that of the men's rows, although care should be taken that the stall-backs do not obstruct the view of the altar from the nave.

Little need be said of the seats themselves, excepting that more width is required by the clergy and choirmen than the usual 20 inches per person allowed in the nave pews. For the choirmen, 22 inches, and for the clergy, perhaps 24 inches is sufficient. The depth of the seat can also be increased from the usual 14 to 16 inches, since the additional cost per seat incurred thereby has not to be greatly multiplied, as in the case of the nave seats. The book-desks should be desks, and not mere rails ; 11 inches will be found to be a very convenient width. Their height will be regulated by the fact that they are required whilst kneeling ; they should not, therefore, be higher than 2 ft. 9 ins., for the men, and 2 ft. 4 ins., for the boys. A shelf below the desk

should be provided to every row for the books not in actual use at the time.

The gangways for access should be of a convenient width, not less than 24 inches; but those before the returned clergy stalls would be all the better for being wider, in order to leave greater free space in front of the clergy. In ordinary choirs, with the clergy placed in returned stalls, no gangway midway in the length of the stalls will be required. Sharp corners, or anything like modern pinnacled buttresses or other projections, which may be liable to tear the surplices, should either be rounded off or removed altogether from the neighbourhood of the gangways.

LUDLOW: LOOKING EAST. (See page 138.)

CHAPTER V

The Sanctuary

PASSING eastwards through the choir, or western portion of the chancel, we reach the sanctuary, the place of the altar and those who minister at the altar. It is the Christian Holy of Holies ; for it is the shrine of God's altar, and the whole of the church leads up to this. In the basilicas, with their long ranges of colonnades, the horizontal lines appear to converge towards the sanctuary and direct the eye to this part of the building. While the whole church was decorated, the sanctuary was decorated more richly ; for the best that art and wealth could produce found there its home.

In the buildings of the Romanesque and Gothic periods the horizontal lines are to

some extent lost, and vertical lines take their place, leading the eye upwards ; but the sanctuary is still marked out by a richer treatment than the rest of the church.

It is on the sanctuary that the greatest care and thought should be exercised, not only in the matter of its decoration but also in its arrangements. While the choir-services are comparatively simple, and their requirements small, the service of the altar is more elaborate, necessitating many things, even in those churches where a minimum amount of ceremonial is used. In the past century we suffered much owing to the want of forethought in the building of our churches, provision only having been made for the needs of the time, without any regard to the requirements of the future. Nowhere is this more true than in the case of the chancel, and particularly the sanctuary. A century ago, when the Holy Communion was but seldom celebrated, some excuse could be made for

very small sanctuaries ; but signs were not wanting during the last half-century that things were altering, and that there was a growing need for a ceremonial more complete than had prevailed in the past. In spite of these signs we have gone on building sanctuaries absurdly small and utterly inadequate for modern needs. In a new building it is better to err on the side of making the sanctuary too large rather than too small ; for, apart from the liturgical question, there is that of architectural dignity to be taken into consideration, and the extra cost of building is thus not thrown away, though indeed an additional foot or two in length does not increase this cost very much.

Basilican

In the basilicas the chancel consisted solely of the sanctuary, and it opened directly from the nave, without any architectural choir. In form it was a semicircular apse roofed with a half-dome.

The wall above the apsidal arch afforded scope for the artist in mosaic. At S. Lorenzo in Rome there is a fifth-century example in which Christ is represented seated upon the globe of the world, with S. Peter and other saints standing on either side. Among other examples of the same date is S. Maria Maggiore, also at Rome, where the mosaics illustrate subjects from the events of the Nativity.

Inside the apse the walls were lined with rich marbles, and the soffite of the semi-dome treated with mosaics. The subjects of these mosaics were generally representations of Christ in glory surrounded by angels and the Apostles. One example of this decoration at S. Pudenziana, Rome, is particularly interesting, inasmuch as it belongs to the fourth century. The decoration was not limited to mosaic work, but often, where expense was a consideration, as in the case of the smaller basilicas, the design was executed in fresco. It is, however, owing to the lasting nature of

the mosaics that these examples have been preserved, thus enabling us to realize something of the treatment of the early sanctuaries.

The Levels

The floor of the sanctuary was raised above the general level of the church. In this respect the Christians had followed the arrangement in the apse of the secular basilica. It was from this raising of the floor that the sanctuary was sometimes known as the Bema (the name given to the platform from which the Athenian orators addressed the people), while sometimes it is called the apse from its shape. The object in view was obviously a practical one. In large buildings, such as some of these basilicas were, it was necessary to give this elevation in order that the voices might be heard. But, apart from such a reason, the raising of the floor tended to add greater dignity to this portion of the building.

But this raising of the floor was sometimes excessive, and for an important reason. After the Peace of the Church basilicas were erected over the tombs of the Apostles and martyrs in the cemeteries ; and the sanctuary was placed immediately above the *confessio* or crypt which held the tomb. In the fourth century a *confessio* was purposely made under the sanctuary of the basilica of S. Valentine, in which the saint's remains were placed. These practices necessitated the raising of the sanctuary floor, even had it not been desirable to do so for the other reasons mentioned. The *confessio* is thought to have suggested the crypt, which became a feature of later churches, although it should be observed that the arrangement and treatment were not quite similar.

The Position of the Altar and Thrones

The altar was placed in the front of the sanctuary, on the line of the chord of the

apse. When the bema extended into the transept the position of the holy table was somewhere between the triumphal arch at the east end of the nave and the arch of the apse.

Around the semicircular wall of the apse were the seats of the clergy. The bishop's *cathedra*, or throne, was in the centre, and on either side were the second thrones or benches of the presbyters. The bishop and clergy thus faced the congregation ; and between them was the altar. At the time of celebrating the Eucharist the bishop would stand facing the people—a practice which still survives at Rome when the Lord's Supper is celebrated in certain of the older basilicas.

Mediæval

In the mediæval churches of England, as we have already seen, a choir was introduced between the nave and the sanctuary ; but the screen was placed in its original

Photo] [*T. White & Son, Littlehampton.*

ARUNDEL: STONE ALTAR. (See page 92.)

position at the east end of the nave in the entrance to the chancel. How, then, was the sanctuary marked off from the choir or western portion of the chancel? In a few cases the choir formed a separate architectural division of the building, so that the sanctuary was as distinct as if it opened direct from the nave. But elsewhere the sanctuary and the choir shared the chancel, the former occupying the eastern end, and the latter the western portion. Occasionally, as at St. David's Cathedral, another screen was erected between the choir and the sanctuary. But, except in the case of the larger Spanish churches, it seems to have been generally felt that the chancel screen was a sufficient enclosure and protection to the altar, and that nothing further was required. A distinction, however, was usually made, firstly, in the floor-levels, and, secondly, by the richer and more elaborate architectural treatment of the sanctuary.

The Levels

The sanctuary was raised, as a general rule, by at least one step. In larger churches there were sometimes two or more. Unfortunately, the floors of many of our ancient churches have been so altered that it is not always possible to determine the original arrangement. The sedilia, however, will generally act as an index to one level. These alterations in the floor and steps are much to be regretted, since they have sometimes affected the whole arrangement of the sanctuary and its furniture.

In an ordinary sized modern church, one step at the entrance to the sanctuary is usually enough. In some of our churches too many steps have been introduced, which, instead of adding dignity to the sanctuary, have rather degraded it by dwarfing its proportions.

The sanctuary-step should not be placed too close to the eastern end of the choir-

stalls. Room is generally required here for the approach of the choir from the vestry, and also for the clergy and other ministers on their way from the sacristy to the altar. But equally important is the ample provision of space for the communicants. The space therefore between the stalls and the sanctuary step should be about five feet wide, or even wider, but four feet should be the minimum.

In some old churches there may be noticed a richer treatment of the sanctuary in the whole design from roof to pavement, and occasionally in the material also in which it is executed. The walls are sometimes decorated by arcading or panelling, and enriched with niches; the windows have an additional member or order in their mouldings. The roof over the sanctuary is often varied by being ceiled with boarding and enriched with cornices, ribs, intermediate ribs, and carved bosses, whereas the other roofs are of open timbering or of simpler panelling. Occasionally

it is groined instead of being flat or coved. In one way or another, even in the simplest of churches, some distinction generally marks the reverence attached to the sanctuary.

The Position of the Altar, etc.

The chief "ornaments" of the sanctuary are the altar, credence, piscina, and sedilia for the use of the ministers ; and an altar-rail and kneeling-pad for the convenience of communicants. These will be discussed separately in Chapter XI ; but before leaving the consideration of the sanctuary, their position in it should be mentioned.

The position of the altar should be central in the width of the sanctuary, and near to the east wall. In planning new churches, it is not advisable to set the altar directly against the wall, unless the chancel be a small one, since it is better to allow sufficient space behind it to enable access to be obtained. The advantage of this is that it enables both the floor and the

east window to be reached for cleaning purposes, and it is also very convenient to be able to get at the altar from behind. In old churches, however, the plan of the sanctuary generally requires the altar to be set against the wall; though sometimes this is not the case, and an ugly modern reredos may be conveniently hidden by placing the dorsal and altar about a foot in front of it.

The credence, piscina, and sedilia should all be recessed in or set against the south wall. The communicants' rails should be placed on the step at the entrance of the sanctuary.

PAINTING FROM A FIFTEENTH-CENTURY M.S.

(See page 101.)

CHAPTER VI

The Altar

THE object of a church is the provision of a building suitable for the congregational worship of God according to Christian ideas. In the Christian religion the sacrifice is its very centre ; from this everything else radiates. Take away the doctrine of the Incarnation and the Atonement from the Christian religion and what is there left ? In Christian worship the Holy Eucharist stands as a witness to these doctrines. The altar itself for this reason is the most essential piece of furniture or "ornament" (using the word in its Prayer Book sense) in the church. It should represent in the building what the service of the altar represents in Christian worship. A church without an altar would

cease to be a church, and would be nothing more than a meeting-house.

The altar, then, should be of great dignity, and should be accorded the most prominent position in the church. Its place, as we have seen, is in a separate part of the church specially prepared for it, up to which the rest of the building leads. It is raised above the general level to give it dignity and importance, and it has been screened to give it protection and to surround it with the impression of mystery.

Early Christian Altars

The first Christian altars were undoubtedly constructed of wood. When Christians met in the upper chamber of a Jewish private house or in the *atrium* of a Roman mansion for the purpose of "the breaking of bread," the ordinary table provided the altar, and the communicants sat around it. A fresco in the Catacomb of Priscilla represents this arrangement,

no doubt, as the artist had seen it in the very catacomb which he had decorated. The date of this fresco is put within the first half of the second century.

As the Church grew in numbers such an arrangement would have been inconvenient, if not impossible, and something like the practice now universal was then adopted. But although the arrangement was varied, the material of the holy table would not necessarily be changed with it. It was still essential that the altar should be easily removed, and for this reason wood was extremely suitable.

When the place of the meetings of Christians was transferred from private houses to specially erected buildings, it became no longer necessary to have a movable altar. Other materials were then possible; and stone and marble would naturally suggest themselves as alternatives in buildings where they were so largely used, even if there had been no precedents for the use of such materials in

the construction of altars. It is said that Pope Evaristus, in the early part of the second century, prohibited the use of wooden altars; but as we find a similar prohibition ascribed to Pope Sylvester, early in the fourth century, it does not appear that the rule had been universally observed. The authority for both these statements is of a much later date, and therefore of very doubtful value. Both S. Athanasius and S. Augustine refer to wooden altars. But there is no doubt that stone altars were largely used, and that at a later date they almost entirely displaced the wooden ones.

The earliest examples of altars extant are of stone, and date from the fifth century. They are tables in form, consisting of a solid stone *mensa* or top, in shape an oblong but almost square, being exceedingly short as compared with modern altars. The *mensa* is supported on four legs, which take the form of circular columns or shafts. In one

example there is an additional central column; and in another example one support in the centre alone carries the *mensa*. The edge of the *mensa* is carved, but otherwise these altars are generally extremely simple.

In the sixth century the table form of the altar gave way to the box-like form. This change in the shape was perhaps brought about by the desire to enclose the relics of the saints in the altars themselves instead of merely erecting holy tables in churches built over their tombs.

Mediæval Altars

During the Middle Ages the altars were almost always built of stone. Canons were passed at various English councils (e.g. the Council of Winchester, 1076) ordering the altars to be made of stone. William of Malmesbury tells us that S. Wulstan, Bishop of Worcester, commanded the destruction of wooden altars,

PAINTING FROM A FIFTEENTH-CENTURY M.S.
(See page 148.)

and the erection of stone ones in their place. Visitation Articles also inquired whether the holy tables were of stone. But, despite Canons and Articles of Visitations, mediæval altars were occasionally constructed of wood. Mr. St. John Hope, in *The English Altar*, published by the Alcuin Club, gives an illustration from an illuminated Psalter of the twelfth century in which a wooden altar is depicted. From the evidence of a will we learn that there was a wooden holy table at Aldwark in the year 1432. Erasmus also mentions a wooden altar in the Cathedral at Canterbury. But with a few exceptions the holy tables of the Middle Ages were of stone.

In shape the altar was chest-like, similar to those of the sixth century already described ; in fact, an example [1] could be quoted where it was actually used for the undesirable purpose of a chest to hold books and vestments. In design and construction mediæval altars were usually

[1] S. John Hungate, York, 1435.

exceedingly plain. The *mensa* consisted of a single slab of stone, with the lower edges of its front and the two ends bevelled; it was supported on a solid stonework base a few inches smaller than the top. Incised in the top face of the *mensa* were five consecration crosses, one in the centre, and the other four at the corners. It is by these marks that an old *mensa* may often be recognized. Occasionally other methods of supporting the *mensa* were adopted—such as the use of pillars, or even wall-brackets; but the solid base was the usual means of support.

Owing to the general destruction of the stone altars at the Reformation, only a few examples remain in this country. The *mensa*, when the altar was destroyed, was often used as a paving slab and found a place face downwards in the sanctuary floor. Some of these old slabs have been discovered and restored to their proper use. From them we are able to form some idea of the size of the ancient altars.

Like the primitive examples, the altars of the *early* mediæval period were extremely short; sometimes not more than three or four feet in length. This shortness may have been due to tradition; or, possibly, it may have been occasioned by the difficulty in those days of obtaining a very large slab of stone, since the single stone was regarded as a symbol of the unity of the Church. At a later date, however, the altars were increased in length, and we find them as long as 12 ft. 6 ins., which is the length of the old Arundel altar. The holy table at Tewkesbury is also of great length, measuring as much as 13 ft. 3 ins. by 3 ft. 4½ ins. It is difficult accurately to date these old *mensæ*; but, generally, a long altar indicates a late period.

Reformation and Post-Reformation Altars

The Reformation period witnessed first of all the destruction of the old stone

altars. Bishop Ridley began this havoc in London in the fourth year of King Edward VI. The high altar at S. Paul's was pulled down and destroyed on June 11th, 1550, the bishop being present at the time. There appears to have been no legal authority for this wanton destruction, although Ridley was supported in his action by the Council. Later in the year orders were issued to the other bishops to have the altars in their dioceses removed. This work was carried out to a large extent by the Zwinglian Gospellers, a band of Poles and Germans.

The place of the stone holy table was taken by one of wood. According to the Elizabethan Injunctions the Lord's table was to be decently made and set in the place where the altar formerly stood. The controversy, however, over the altar appears to have been about its position, rather than its shape or material. It was to occupy the same position as the altar had originally occupied; but, at the time of

Celebration, it was to be set east and west, instead of altarwise, i.e. north and south. Some followed the old way and some the new position. The controversy was settled in 1662, when the Prayer Book was finally revised, together with the Ornaments Rubric which refers us back to the arrangements of the second year of King Edward VI.

The wooden altars which took the place of the stone ones were often oak tables similar to those in domestic use. No doubt, at first, a domestic table was often requisitioned for the purpose of an altar, since some of the examples are exceedingly low for use in celebrating. Many of them are beautifully worked, having their bulbous legs and frames richly carved after the Elizabethan manner. As a rule they were short in length compared with the later mediæval stone altars, although some of them were as long as ten feet, as at Holy Trinity, Coventry.

At a later date it was not at all an uncommon thing to make the *mensa* of marble or of slate, and to support it on iron legs or brackets. This was done when it was no longer required to make the altar movable; that is to say, after the Prayer Book revision in 1662, although there is evidence of stone altars also in the Laudian period. Bishop Montague, for instance, in his Visitation Articles, 1638, asks, "Is your Communion Table, or Altar, of stone wainscot, joiners' work, strong, fair, and decent?"

Post-Reformation stone altars are indeed much more common than is generally supposed; and no question seems to have been raised as to the legality or otherwise of any particular material until the erection of a stone altar in S. Sepulchre's, Cambridge, was made the subject of legal proceedings (Faulkener *v.* Litchfield) in 1843 and declared illegal. In Scotland and America altars are made of stone or wood indifferently, and they are not really

illegal according to the law of the Anglican Church, but only according to the now discredited misinterpretation of it by the State courts of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER VII

Altar Frontals and the Footpace

Altar Frontals

REFERENCE has already been made to the fact that the altars of the basilicas, as well as subsequent examples, were usually extremely simple and plain in design. Why was this? Why was it that great wealth was lavished on the rest of the building and its other fittings, and the altar—the most important ornament of the church—left so extremely simple? The answer to this question would appear to be that it was intended to be covered. It was to show—so it has been said—that the Lord's table, although an altar, was the altar of "unbloody sacrifice." Custom, well-nigh universal in Christendom, has always clothed the Lord's table with some

S. Vitale, Ravenna: Sixth-Century Mosaic showing Altar.
(See page 98.)

covering, at least, during the celebrating of the Holy Mysteries. In early days, no doubt, these coverings were of the nature of cloths laid upon the altar and hanging over its four sides. Such a covering to the small, cube-like altar is shown in one of the sixth-century mosaics at S. Vitale, at Ravenna (Plate 30). In S. Appolinare in Classe, near the same place, is a similar example, showing an altar of a century later. In both cases the covering is very plain, being merely enriched on the top and on the front with a coloured border and a patterned centre. In mediæval times the same custom prevailed, and for a similar reason. It was intended that the altar should be covered, except during the last three days of Holy Week, when it was left bare, as a sign of sorrow, and, in some places, during Masses for the dead. In course of time the altar coverings became more varied and elaborate, and linen was always spread on the table of the altar during

Mass, in Western Europe, while the front was covered with another kind of textile. This was sometimes woven with a design, sometimes richly embroidered. In earlier times the covering consisted of a large square of material, which enveloped the whole of the altar, and hung in folds at the corners. With the lengthened altar of the fully-developed Gothic period, this covering was restricted to the long side of the altar, and the folds consequently disappeared. Since the covering now only draped the front, it became known as the frontal (Latin, *frontale*, or *antependium*) or nether frontal. The linen cloth varied in form ; it was generally only spread when the altar was used. At times it came down the front of the altar, but, in the Gothic period, more usually down the ends only, as we generally see it now.

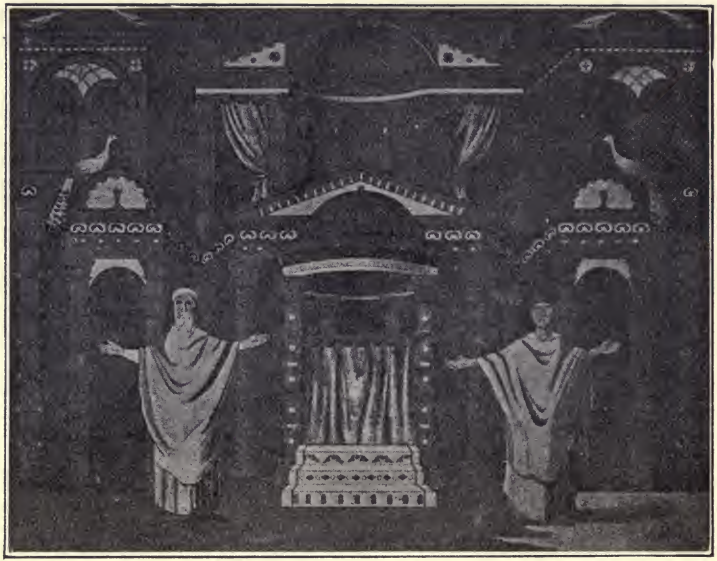
Even when the altar itself was richly decorated the custom of the Church demanded that it should be kept covered in service-time, or, at least, during Mass.

Thus, at the present day, in the conservative Church of S. Ambrose, at Milan, the famous golden altar is covered with a frontal in Mass-time. Instances are also to be found in mediæval inventories of rich movable frontals of metal or carved work instead of a textile material.

The Edwardian inventories also contain numerous items of altar frontals and hangings; nor was it ever intended at the Reformation to strip the altar bare of its covering. The Elizabethan injunctions of 1559 order the holy table to be commonly (i.e., as a general rule) covered. Canon 82 of 1603 likewise orders the tables to be covered with a "carpet of silk or other decent stuff." The altar frontal is also one of the ornaments ordered by the Ornaments Rubric of 1662, because it was undoubtedly in universal and lawful use in the second and following years of Edward VI; indeed in all the better-ordered churches its use continued through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,

notwithstanding a certain amount of Puritan disuse.

While this veiling of the altar is rigorously observed throughout the Holy Orthodox Eastern Church, there has been a recent tendency to omit it in certain parts of the Roman Communion (though not in Italy itself) notwithstanding that the rubrics of the Roman missal plainly order the altar to be covered with a frontal of the colour of the vestments of the Mass. It was during the later Renaissance that this practice began to spread, particularly in France; and, in the nineteenth century, it extended to other parts of the Roman Church, especially in these islands and in America. The naked altar has unfortunately been sometimes copied among ourselves; though this is contrary to ecclesiastical prescription, for in the Church of England the frontal has always been required by law. In mediæval times it was an ornament which the parishioners were bound to provide, and the pictures



S. George's, Thessalonica: Mosaic showing Ciborium.
(See page 103.)

and inventories of those times attest its richness and its use.

The Footpace

Although the sanctuary-floor of the basilica, as we have seen, was raised above the general level of the church, the altar was placed on a further raised platform. The *Testament of our Lord*, which was written about the middle of the fourth century, gives a description of "how the sanctuary ought to be." It states "But that place where the altar is, let it be raised three steps, for there the altar ought to be." The passage is somewhat obscure, since the Syriac word for "altar" is used both for the sanctuary and the altar itself. In a mosaic in the Church of S. George, at Thessalonica (Plate 31), the altar is represented, as the *Testament* seems to order it, standing on a platform of three steps; and the three steps are either carpeted or of inlaid marble—it is impossible to say which.

The altar of the fourth-century basilica at Silchester was evidently placed directly on the sanctuary floor, which, again, was of the same level as that of the nave. But in this exceptional case the church was so small that it was hardly necessary to raise either the altar or the sanctuary.

In the churches of the Middle Ages it was usual to provide a raised platform or wide step on which the altar and the celebrant stood. This step or platform is known as the footpace. In small churches it consisted of a raised floor one step in height, not much longer than the altar itself, but projecting about two or three feet in front of it ; but a large church demanded greater height, and the footpace was raised by the addition of one or more steps—generally two—on which the deacon and the sub-deacon respectively stood at the time of Celebration.

CHAPTER VIII

Modern Altars

IN the arrangement of the sanctuary, and in the treatment of the altar for a modern church, some supervision over the architect is especially necessary.

When the choice of an architect has to be made, preference is, not unnaturally, often given to a local man, who with all his good qualities is not generally a specialist. Now it is often forgotten that an architect relies very much on the information given to him by his employers. A man who has one day to design a hospital, and the next a public library, and after that a church, can hardly be expected to be an expert in the intricacies of the requirements for each of these special classes of buildings. He needs,

therefore, definite instructions on those points where it is so easy for him to go astray. Unfortunately the architect cannot be sure that the neighbouring churches to which he may turn for guidance honestly fulfil the requirements of the religion for which the building is to be used; for, in consequence of certain breaks in tradition and want of knowledge, as well as for other reasons, it is by no means certain that the arrangements of any particular church are a fit model for imitation. The modern architect needs, in addition to having a technical knowledge of his own profession, to be an expert ecclesiologist and a learned ecclesiastical lawyer, as well as an antiquary. These very often he is not, and the parson and his committee should put him right—just as at the present time they often insist on a really expert church architect doing that which is wrong.

The standard of the Church of England is set forth in the opening pages of the

Book of Common Prayer. The traditions of the Church had been broken at the time of the Reformation and the Commonwealth. At the Restoration the revisers of the Prayer Book referred us back to those ancient traditions of this country which were current in the second year of Edward VI. These are the standard and guide in our arrangements of to-day. And this standard was actually adhered to, notwithstanding Renaissance architecture, to a far greater extent than is commonly supposed, as witness some of the better-appointed altars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The Material of the Altar

From what has been said it will have been seen that the altars of the Middle Ages were usually constructed of stone. That was the material of which they were built, and built too in accordance with the requirements of canons. Here and

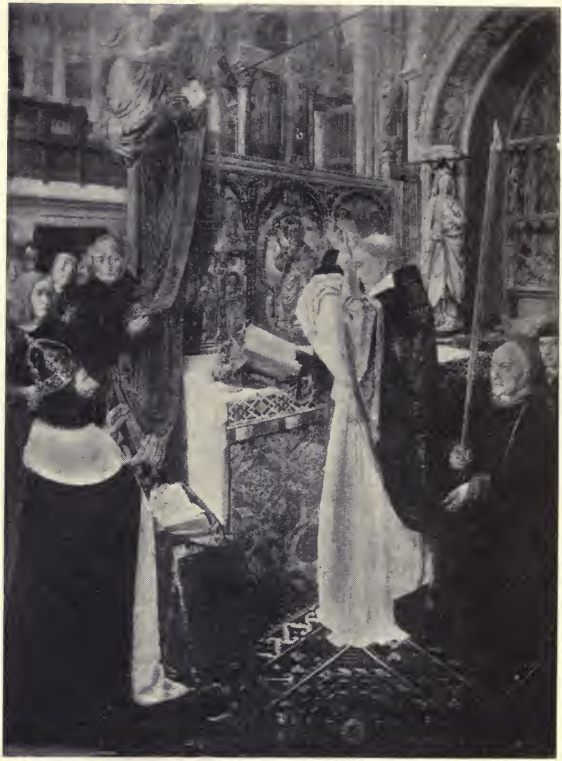
there evidence is forthcoming of the use of wood, but these were exceptions and uncanonical. If, then, the Ornaments Rubric has any meaning at all, our altars ought to be constructed of stone. As a matter of fact they seldom are, wood has almost completely taken its place. But what is the authority for this substitution? There may be decisions of the so-called Ecclesiastical Courts condemning stone altars, but since the authority of these courts is not recognized by the Church as a whole, how may the use of wood for the material be justified? There is no doubt that wood is a most convenient material for the purpose. Which, then, is to prevail, obedience to the canons or convenience? Common sense would often suggest convenience; and should any one have any scruples on the point, it may be as well to point out that since stone altars have been superseded by wooden ones, there is a case of desuetude, or contrary custom abrogating a canon,

which most canonists regard (subject to certain conditions) as being legitimate.

There is no doctrinal significance attached to the use of stone, as some rather superstitious persons seem to think. Stone may have been the necessary material of the altars upon which the sacrifices of the old Covenant were offered; but the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the new law is an "unbloody Sacrifice"; therefore stone is no longer necessary. If symbolism is to enter into the question of material at all, then there is this at least to be said, that the altar of the cross was made of wood.

In any case the material should be good, and since wood appears to be often the most suitable substance, a good hard-wood, such as oak, walnut, or mahogany, should be used.

Hybrid altars should be avoided; the altar should be all wood or all stone. And we have no right to use a super-altar or stone slab embedded in the wood,



CELEBRATION OF THE MASS: PAINTING OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY, FLEMISH SCHOOL.

since the rite of consecrating it is obsolete, and it has been lawfully disused.

The Dimensions

The dimensions of the height and the depth of the altar are fixed by the purpose for which it is required, but its length is variable. The length of the primitive altar, as well as of those of the earlier part of the Middle Ages, was extremely short. The primitive altar was four-square, as the holy table in the East is to this day, but it increased in length at a later period. What is to be the length of an altar now? Has the Church of England laid down any regulations in this respect? Only the rubrics of the Prayer Book relating to the chancel and ornaments have anything to say on the matter. They go into no details, but simply refer us back to the second year of Edward VI. In that year there was no uniform length; some were short, but others were long;

the proportions of their length to the sanctuary varied according to their date.

The question therefore must shift from liturgical to æsthetic grounds, and here it is less easy to dogmatize. An altar that is short has little to commend it, except in connection with the special basilican arrangement of early times. It will look out of proportion in a reasonable sized sanctuary, and consequently insignificant. A long altar, on the other hand, is extremely dignified, its length tending to fill out the sanctuary gives the impression that the sanctuary was built to receive it. Care, however, should be taken that there shall be no suggestion of overcrowding. The length of the altar should bear a certain relationship to the width of the sanctuary. The late Sir Gilbert Scott made this length about one-third the width of the chancel. This was a step in the right direction, but it was hardly enough. A proportion in the ratio of five to twelve gives a very good

length without any danger of excess. Thus in a narrow chancel 18 ft. wide the altar would be 7 ft. 6 in. long; 24 ft. wide would give 10 ft., and 30 ft. wide 12 ft. 6 in. long. The latter length being the dimension of the old altar at Arundel, where the chancel is about 30 ft. in width. A minimum length should be about twice the height of the altar, i.e., 6 ft. 6 in. The effect of a long altar has only to be seen to be appreciated; and where the opportunity is given of making a comparison between the merits of the long and the short altar, the general opinion can hardly fail to be in favour of the former.

The depth of the altar should be sufficient to take a corporal with something to spare. As a rule the corporal is about 20 in. square, so that the depth should, if possible, be not less than 2 ft. 6 in. It should be remembered that every inch in the depth is taken off the floor of the sanctuary, which very

often can ill spare it. As a rule the depth given above will be found to meet the usual requirements, although an increase by a few more inches will add weight and dignity, and prevent an appearance of undue flatness. Thus, if the sanctuary be large enough, 3 ft. or even 3 ft. 6 in. in depth is desirable.

The height may be anything from 3 ft. 2 in. to 3 ft. 6 in., but every inch added to the height tends to detract from the advantage in appearance gained by the long altar. Preference should therefore be given to the lower dimension, especially where a narrow sanctuary prevents the length from being made as much as one would wish to have it. It may be added that the majority of priests would find a 3 ft. 3 in. altar the most convenient height for practical use, and would much prefer to have all altars of this uniform standard, since variations in height sometimes lead to accidents in celebrating.

The Design

The design of the altar should be left to the architect, since, like everything else, it should be in keeping with the rest of the chancel and its fittings. Too often the altar and its adjuncts are taken out of the hands of the professional adviser; and the incumbent, or the special donor, consults a church tailor's catalogue, and selects what he considers suitable. Such a course is not fair to the architect, and may result in the spoiling of the whole sanctuary. The design should be simple in character.

It is better to expend money on richer frontals than on the ornamentation of the altar itself. During the period from after the Celebration on Maundy Thursday to the first Evensong of Easter, when the altar should be stripped bare of its hangings, it is very incongruous to see a richly decorated holy table when the keynote of the Church is that of

mourning and penitence. Anything like large projecting buttresses and tabernacle work which would be in the way of the frontal should be avoided. The *mensa* should not project more than two inches beyond the frame of the altar, although a smaller projection would be better. A plinth or sill-piece should, if possible, be avoided, but if it be necessary it should be made as flat as possible, to allow of the frontal hanging clear.

The Vesting of the Altar

The covering of the altar should consist of a frontal and frontlet. These should be as rich as possible, since they often afford the only opportunity of introducing what is so sadly needed in our churches —a little colour. But the whole colour scheme of the sanctuary should be considered at the same time, and not left to the mere chance of the different colours harmonizing. It is also important that this scheme should be in competent hands.

The colours of the frontal should be reasonably bright, it is quite unnecessary to have them toned down as though there was a fear of having anything of cheerful appearance in a church. The mistake we suffer from in many of our churches is dinginess. Nor should they be necessarily of plain colours. The common type of frontal usually consists of a plain material edged with fringe below, and having a sacred monogram or cross embroidered in the centre, and perhaps stripes on each side. It is not a happy type. The sacred monogram and cross are overdone, and the covering would look all the better without either of them. Where an elaborately embroidered frontal cannot be afforded, figured tapestry is far better for the purpose than a plain coloured material. The figuring of the pattern can be further enriched by picking it out with gold thread. If the pattern be bold, a rich effect is produced and it can be well seen, even at the west end of the church.

Plate 33.

MODEL ALTAR: BY S. DUNSTAN'S SOCIETY. (See page 119.)

The S. Dunstan Society has shown us what can be done in the way of the utilization of inexpensive tapestries in frontal making, and has produced most successful results of this kind (Plate 33).

In simple as well as in elaborate frontals, it is design and colour that count more than anything else. It is better, therefore, to employ an artist than to expend money on greater enrichment. But here again an expert is required.

Excepting, perhaps, in the case of the more elaborate and heavily embroidered frontals, no frame is required. The frontal will be all the better for being a trifle loose, as it will have a more natural and less formal appearance about it. To produce this effect it should be hung: a few half-inch rings sewn on the inside of the frontal near the top edge, will suspend it on the altar. Screws or dresser-hooks fixed an inch or two below the *mensa* will provide the means of suspen-

sion. The two end hooks should either be fixed on the return north and south faces of the altar, or else screwed into the under side of the *mensa* ; this should be done to give support to the frontal at the extremities, and thus avoid any dropping at the ends.

The frontlet, often incorrectly called the super-frontal, is a narrow frontal about seven inches in depth, which hangs from the upper edge of the *mensa*. It is generally sewn on to a piece of stout linen which covers the top of the altar. The linen should be broad enough to overhang at the back of the altar, and should be weighted with lead in order to balance the weight of the material of the frontal, or fastened with hooks or tapes.

The frontlet may be either of figured tapestry or of a plain material, such as velvet, and should be edged with fringe which may sometimes be similar to that on the frontal below. It may also be embroidered or treated in a variety of

ways. It is unnecessary for the colour to be similar to that of the frontal; on the contrary, it is all the better if it is not. The colour should, however, be selected so that it will harmonize with most of the various coloured frontals, as it may be inconvenient to have to change the frontlet every time that the frontal is changed. Two frontlets at least should be provided, one for ferial and the other for festal use. Lent should have its own frontlet. But it is often more satisfactory to have a frontlet to go with each frontal.

The Footpace and Steps

In the matter of the footpace one cannot do better than follow the ancient examples. In the smaller churches this would consist of a platform raised one step in height. A five-inch step is to be preferred to the usual six-inch, for the reason previously given on page 53.

The dimensions of the footpace are

dependent upon the size of the altar. It should extend about twelve inches beyond at each end, although six or nine inches will suffice where there is a narrow sanctuary. The space in front should be sufficiently wide to enable the priest to kneel comfortably, without having his feet too near the edge. This will require a clear space of not less than three feet. But it may not always be possible to obtain so much space, in which case it is better to go to the other extreme and to make it nothing more than a broad step about two feet wide. The celebrant will then raise himself from the kneeling position from the lower rather than the upper level. The mean between these two dimensions will be found to be less comfortable.

In larger churches two additional steps are required, both for dignity and for use. They should be broad enough to allow the deacon and the sub-deacon to stand and move about freely, but not so wide as to necessitate a long stride to mount

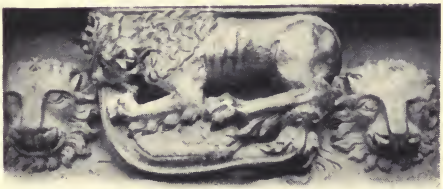
PAINTING, "JUSTUS OF GHENT": ANTWERP MUSEUM.

them. To meet these requirements they should be from twenty-one to twenty-four inches in width. The upper, or deacon's step, may return at each end, but it is not necessary that these side steps should be of the same width as those in front, twelve or fifteen inches being ample for them. The lower or sub-deacon's step can extend the full width of the sanctuary, although it may be necessary to break it at the sedilia. In a medium-sized church this step can be omitted.

The footpace and its attendant steps should be covered with a decent carpet about the width of the footpace, or the length of the altar. It should extend from the holy table to the altar rails.

Ample space should be left between the bottom step and the communicants' rail to enable the celebrant and deacon in administering to pass without jostling one another. As the standard candlesticks will usually have to be placed somewhere here, their position should be settled

before the width of this space is determined. Should it be necessary to place them between the bottom step and the rail a minimum of six feet will be required. If, on the other hand, their position be beyond the angle of the returned step, then five feet may be taken as the minimum for convenience. The standard candlesticks should be two in number, like those upon the altar ; and no shield or metal fitting should ever be allowed to break the lines of the candles themselves.



CHAPTER IX

Ciborium, Dorsal, Riddels, and Reredos

The Ciborium

As already stated, the altar in a basilica was comparatively small, and varied little in size, if at all, no matter what was the size of the apse in which it stood. It can well be imagined, therefore, that in itself it would have looked somewhat insignificant, and rather lost in a large building. To obviate this defect, and to give greater reverence and dignity to the altar, some means had to be devised. The requirements of the altar in the matter of height would not admit of it being increased in this direction. The first step was to raise it on a platform, but that in itself was not sufficient. The

next method adopted was to place a canopy over it—the canopy being regarded as a mark of honour. This was known by the name of the *ciborium* or baldacchino; the former title being given to it from its original shape—an inverted cup. It consisted of a flat dome or cupola, supported on an entablature carried by four columns. These were placed near the four angles of the altar, but at a sufficient distance to allow a free passageway around.

None of the earlier *ciboria* remain, but the mosaic in S. George's, Thessalonica (Plate 31), shows the original form, and we also learn something of them from written descriptions. Every variety of material appears to have been used, including wood, marble, and metal, and great wealth was employed. The ciborium presented by Constantine to the Lateran had a roof of silver which weighed over two thousand pounds. On the front and back faces in the centre were images of our Lord seated, and around on all the

faces were the twelve Apostles. The soffite, or the under side, of the dome was lined with gold. In S. Sophia, at Constantinople, there existed up to the thirteenth century a ciborium which had its columns of silver as well as its top of that metal.

But not every ciborium was as rich as these were. Wood was sometimes used, as in the case of an example at Ravenna, which was, however, removed in the sixth century, and replaced by a better one of silver. Marble was the material usually employed.

In the later examples in the West the canopy became somewhat modified. The cup-like dome, for instance, gave way to the gabled or pyramidal or roof-like top; and the arch sometimes supplanted the entablature. At a still later date the design was sometimes lightened by the introduction of short columns or balusters between the cornice and the roof, as at S. Clemente, Rome (Plate 10).

The hangings were another feature of the early ciborium. Between the columns were rods from which curtains were hung. These were drawn at certain parts of the service in order to screen the altar and the celebrant from the congregation. In primitive times it was thought to be undesirable that the faithful should see the manual acts; and in the East it is still thought so. The *Testament of our Lord*, which was written about the middle of the fourth century in Asia Minor or Eastern Assyria, says, "Let the altar have a veil of pure linen, for it is without spot." This may refer to the veil across the sanctuary which corresponded to the solid screen of wood with veiled entrances in the Orthodox churches, or to the solid wall with veiled openings in those of the Nestorian rite. The Arabic *Didascalia* mentions in addition to the veil a screen round the altar. It is sufficient, however, to say that the intention was always to veil the holy table.

The mosaic at Thessalonica (Plate 31) shows these hangings attached to the columns of the ciborium, and represents them drawn. Although this is an Eastern example, the custom was not confined to the East, but was almost universal. On some of the old columns in Rome the attachments for the rods still remain.

The ciborium was not unknown in England in Anglo-Saxon times. Some of our churches, which were built on basilican lines with an apsidal sanctuary, were, no doubt, provided with a similar enshrinement. A reference to these canopies is made in an Anglo-Saxon Pontifical, where a special prayer for blessing them is given. In the illuminated Benedictional by Godemann for S. Æthelwold, Bishop of Winchester, a ciborium is depicted in one of the paintings.

The Dorsal and Riddels

The primitive four-square altar with its ciborium canopy lasted through the

Romanesque architectural period into the Middle Ages, though longer in some places than in others. In our own islands the square east end triumphed over the apse; and the altar came to be placed against or near the east wall, and commonly beneath a window, instead of in the advanced position it occupied in basilican churches.

Although it was quite possible to erect a ciborium in this new position, yet it was not quite so suitable here as it was when it was less confined. A modified treatment therefore became necessary. The altar gradually increased in length until it reached a dignified dimension, and naturally brought about the disappearance, or rather the modification, of the old ciborium arrangements. The curtain behind the altar became an upper frontal or dorsal, that is, a hanging on the wall behind the holy table. The curtains north and south of the altar remained, but they were now close to the end of it. Sometimes the pillars were left in an attenuated form

PAINTING, "THE EXHUMATION OF S. HUBERT."
(See page 135.)

(Plate 35). Sometimes only the front pair of them ; but more often, in England at least, brackets attached to the east wall formed the means of support for these side hangings of the altar, which in later times were called "riddels."

The altar was thus enshrined, as it were, in a recess of hangings. The material used for them was as rich as that employed in the frontal below. The illuminated manuscripts, from which much may be learnt about the arrangement of mediæval altars, are full of illustrations of this treatment. Although riddels are not always shown in these pictures yet they are very general. In some cases they have been purposely omitted from the illustrations, or pushed back, in order to allow the altar to be seen from the side.

In the apsidal churches of France and the Low Countries there was greater necessity for adapting the pillars of the ciborium to the altered arrangements than in the square east ends of our English

churches, so that the four pillars, or sometimes more, to carry the curtains round the altar were very general. The pillars were sometimes of wood, sometimes of metal. At King's College, Aberdeen, they were of brass, and bore angels holding the instruments of the Passion. Candles were often placed upon them in the angels' hands. Sometimes a rod connecting the two front pillars is shown in pictures, although there is no hanging suspended from it, as was done in the case of the baldacchino of the earlier centuries. It may have been omitted by the artist in order that the altar itself should be depicted ; for it is not improbable that there was a hanging, since Durandus in the thirteenth century tells us that a veil was placed between the clergy and the people : this refers to a screen, but it affords some evidence of the probability of a western hanging to the altar. During Lent a veil was suspended between the choir and the altar in our

churches, and the practice still survives in a modified form in Sicily. It is probably a remnant of the front curtain of the ciborium.

A beautiful example of the arrangement of a mediæval altar with dorsal pillars and riddels is to be seen in "The Exhumation of S. Hubert," a painting of the Flemish School in the National Gallery (Plate 35).

While the ciborium itself, as distinct from its curtains and pillars, in most cases disappeared completely—for a heavy canopy would be utterly out of place in a light Gothic chancel, and would spoil the effect of the stained glass in the window behind—a trace of it remained in the small tent-like cover for the pyx containing the reserved Sacrament which was hung beneath it. These canopies of some textile material were small enough to hang in front of a window without injuring its effect. In some cases, however, the pyx canopy took

LUDLOW: ALTAR CANOPY, S. JOHN'S CHAPEL. (Under Restoration.)
(See page 137.)

the form of a flat or curved tester, and was placed above the window (Plate 36).

In the Continental churches another circumstance must be referred to as accounting for the disappearance or modification of the ciborium. In early days the altar was placed immediately above the grave of a saint or martyr. But in the eighth and ninth centuries a change of religious feeling brought about the custom in the Frankish dominions of raising the body of the saint, and placing it in an elaborate shrine behind the altar in such a way that the western end of the shrine rose immediately behind the table of the altar, and formed a kind of reredos to it. Some indeed would have us trace in this practice the origin of the reredos.

The Reredos

The reredos is another variety of the same arrangement; it was to all intents and purposes practically the same as the

dorsal, only executed in stone, alabaster, metal, or woodwork, instead of being a textile hanging. Its object, however, was the same, so that the size of the altar was the factor which determined its length. It was usual, therefore, to make it about the same length as the altar itself, seldom any longer. Occasionally it extended the full width of the sanctuary, as at Arundel (Plate 27) and Ludlow (Plate 26). But unlike the lofty reredoses of Germany it was comparatively low, and did not as a rule rise further above the top of the altar than a height equal to that of the holy table itself. This was due chiefly to the large and low east window prevalent in English churches, since it was only necessary to ornament the space between the top of the *mensa* and the sill of the window. On the Continent, especially in Spain and Portugal, where there are several fine examples of lofty reredoses or *retablos*, there was often no east window, and consequently there was

SARAGOSSA, SPAIN: RETABLE. (See page 140.)

a large area of east wall to be treated decoratively. The reredos was made to perform this duty. Take, for example, the *retablos* at Saragossa (Plate 37) and Seville Cathedrals, which extend from the floor to the roof, and cover the whole surface of the east wall. They are beautiful pieces of work, but they possess this defect, that the altar, although it is exceedingly long, is thrown into insignificance by this overtowering mass of rich sculpture. Nevertheless, even in cases such as this, one frequently finds the part immediately above the altar treated in a different way, and more as a reredos proper, the rest of the *retablo* being not so much a reredos as either an altar screen or a decorated east wall, corresponding to the great east window of the English churches.

In other countries where the apsidal termination of the sanctuary is the rule, there can be no single large east window, but each side of the polygonal apse has its own light. These windows being smaller

than the English window would not only be less important, but would also give a larger blank space below the sill. Examples exist in England where there is no east window, the omission generally being due to practical reasons such as the existence of adjoining buildings. The college chapels of All Souls and New College at Oxford are instances. In these cases the east wall is covered by a large and lofty reredos similar to those in Spain. This was the case to some extent in Scotland, and nearly always in the side chapels of greater churches of late mediæval times in that country, as at Linlithgow. But in the ordinary English parish church the normal type of reredos was the low one. The work usually consisted of arcading or of traceried panelling, or else of a series of niches with rich canopies which were filled with statues of the saints. More often it consisted of a sculptured panel or panels representing scenes from the Passion or other events in our Lord's life.

Plate 38.

(See page 143.)

Wooden reredoses appear to have been rarer in England than stone ones ; generally they were of decorative panelling with painted subjects in the panels. The ancient one discovered in Norwich Cathedral, a reproduction of which may be seen in the South Kensington Museum, measured 8 ft. 6½ ins. long and 2 ft. 10½ ins. high. There are five painted subjects representing the Scourging, the carrying of the Cross, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and the Ascension.

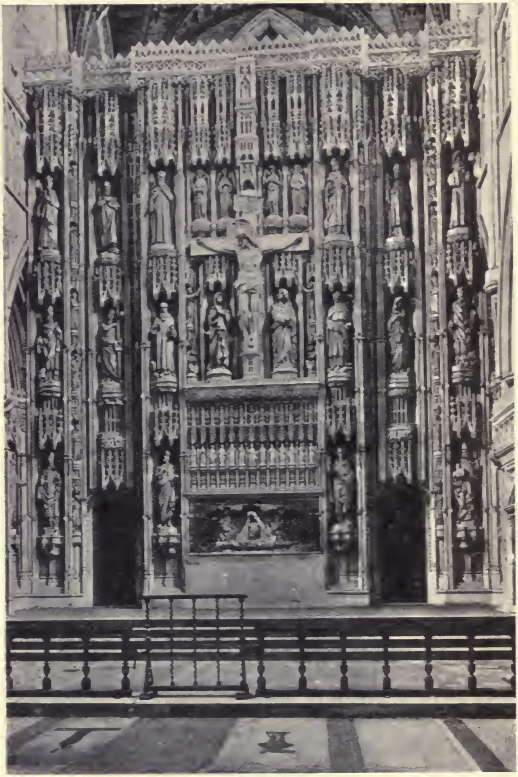
On the Continent, especially in Italy, Germany, and Scandinavia, the triptych was the usual form of reredos. This was a decorative wooden panel about the length of the altar, having a large painted or sculptured subject. Attached to this panel on hinges were two folding leaves, each half the length of the centre panel. These two wings were decorated with smaller subjects or single figures (Plate 38). This form of reredos was rare in this country. It was peculiarly suited to

the apsidal churches of Teutonic lands, where it stood above the altar on the chord of the apse or against a blank wall, and its great height and spreading leaves did not block any windows.

Before leaving this subject some mention ought to be made of the famous stone reredoses, or rather, altar screens, of the type of those in Winchester and St. Albans Cathedrals. In cathedrals the high altar was not set against the east wall, as was done in the case of parish churches, but it occupied a position a bay or two westwards. The holy table was thus left detached. Behind the altar a screen was required, as well as a reredos. In the two examples mentioned they were solid walls of stone extending across the presbytery, and rising to a great height. They were exceedingly rich in their decorative treatment, the design consisting of three tiers of delicately canopied niches containing images. In the centre of the screen was a large crucifix. The

horizontal top was finished with a moulded and carved cornice surmounted by a cresting. On either side of the altar was a doorway. In many respects these altar screens corresponded with the Spanish ones.

A marked feature in these large screens deserves particular mention. Very cleverly worked into the design is the low reredos corresponding in length to that of the altar. This feature is more prominent at St. Albans (Plate 39) than at Winchester, but the treatment in both cases is similar ; in fact it is not improbable that both were designed by the same artist. In the example at St. Albans the base of the reredos which is covered by the altar is of plain stonewalling; immediately above it, and of about the same height, there is a recess now filled in with a piece of modern sculpture. Over this is a row of small niches with canopies, finished on the top with a cornice. This portion of the screen is so different in scale from the rest of the



ST. ALBANS: ALTAR SCREEN. (See page 145.)

work, and the section is so marked by the cornice, that it clearly was intended to make it a distinct feature. Thus, even in the exceptional cases of large screens behind the altar, the constant arrangement of a low dorsal to the holy table was still preserved.

The same thing may even be noticed in the case of many triptychs in which the lowest division, immediately adjoining the *mensa*, is filled with small scenes not intended for distant effect.

The absence of Altar Shelves and Gradines

The altar shelf, now unfortunately so common, is not found in mediæval reredoses in England, although it is sometimes met with in early Renaissance work on the Continent. No example seems to be known in any picture of a Gothic altar, English or foreign, and the attempt made to prove instances from manuscript sources

or existing remains has met with but little support, and now appears to be completely abandoned. There was no need for any shelf, since it was the invariable custom to place the candlesticks, which were sometimes one and sometimes two in number, directly on the *mensa* of the altar. There is ample documentary proof that this was the practice. Occasionally, when the reredos was a "table," *i.e.* sculptured panel of stone or alabaster, images, reliquaries, or plate, found a place on the top edge of it, and one or two foreign pictures could be quoted which show candlesticks set between images on the top of a reredos, but none showing candlesticks upon a shelf. The shelf introduces another horizontal line, extremely confusing to the eye, immediately above the line of the *mensa* of the altar, and, although small in itself, is quite enough to spoil the whole effect of the altar, and to throw everything out of proportion. In every case where a shelf or gradine has been removed the

result is an enormous artistic gain, because when the candlesticks stand directly upon the *mensa*[1] of the altar the eye is insensibly drawn to the altar itself, which thus gains very greatly in prominence as well as in simplicity and dignity. It is worth remembering that all the richest altars of mediæval art had no shelves, and the richest and finest altars still remaining, such as Seville, Saragossa, and Roskilde, have no shelves. The more conservative Roman basilicas have none, and of course there are none anywhere in Eastern Christendom.

[1] It has sometimes been stated that this has been declared illegal by the courts, but there is no foundation for such a statement, since no decision of the kind exists.

CHAPTER X

Modern Dorsals, Wall-hangings, Riddels, and Reredoses

FROM what has already been said it will be seen that the altar is the most necessary and most important ornament of the Church, and that the dorsal or reredos is only intended to add dignity to it, and to emphasize its importance; though unfortunately in some of our churches the converse is the case, the reredos being the object that catches the attention while the altar itself is lost. The proper function of a reredos or dorsal should be borne in mind in considering its introduction into a church; for unless this be done the whole sanctuary may be spoilt.

Photo] [*Cyril Ellis.*

TEMPLE BALSALL. (See page 165.)

The Dorsal

Where funds are limited, it is far better to postpone the erection of a reredos until there are sufficient means to provide something that is beautiful and dignified with sculpture that is the work of a true artist. Indeed, there is no need to have a solid reredos at all. The dorsal is entirely adequate, and when properly made is singularly rich in effect, while it has the advantage of being easily replaced and changed with the seasons of the Christian year. The dorsal too is the original way of screening the wall above the altar, the reredos having been introduced as an alternative method. The dorsal, then, when it is rightly proportioned and made from material of good colour and design, will have a rich and warm stateliness that is as far as possible removed from the gaunt and dingy erections of the nineteenth century. It is in every way to be preferred to the cold stone reredoses

which are to be found in some of our churches.

The simplest form of dorsal is a hanging fixed to the east wall. The size of this is determined by the dimensions of the altar. The length should be not less than that of the holy table, but it is a good plan to make it a couple of inches longer at each end. The height will be determined by the height of the inner sill of the east window, or by the moulded string course which not infrequently runs across the sanctuary below this sill.

In some modern churches, however, the east window is one of those ill-proportioned apertures which have been shortened in height in order to provide a large area of wall-space below the sill. In such a case other considerations will enter into the question of the dorsal's height. Bearing in mind what is the object of the dorsal, we have now to consider its relation with the altar; if the hanging be carried up to the sill of this window, then

the area of the upper frontal will be much greater than that of the frontal and frontlet together. Instead, then, of the altar, the dorsal will be the more conspicuous and important object, while the altar is dwarfed into insignificance. To obviate this bad effect the dorsal (as seen above the altar) should not be of a greater height than the holy table itself, and, indeed, an inch or two less would be better. It was because the architects of our old Gothic churches, with their unerring sense of proportion, designed altars with dorsals or reredoses about three feet high, that they built their east ends with window-sills about six to eight feet from the general level of the sanctuary paving.[1]

If, on the other hand, the east window be exceptionally low, the dorsal should be carried up above the level of the inner sill. In certain cases it may even be necessary

[1] See, e.g. the illustrations in *Fifty Pictures of Gothic Altars*, by Percy Dearmer (Alcuin Club), Longmans, 1910.

to carry it above the level of the glass line ; but this should be avoided as far as possible. Often the lowering of the paving to its original level will obviate this difficulty, and it is better to do this in the first instance rather than to have a permanent defect in the whole arrangements. The dorsal itself might be kept lower than usual to avoid the difficulty. Should it be absolutely necessary, however, to carry it above the window, care should be taken that the upper part of the dorsal is well lined to prevent the light from being seen through it.

The dorsal in this simple arrangement should be carried on a rod, having plainly finished ends, which should be supported on the wall by means of a couple of stout hooks. Wrought-iron is far better for the purpose than the usual brass-cased rods with fleur-de-lys terminals, supplied by the church furnishers.

The hangings should be of figured tapestry or stamped velvet or other similar

material. The figuring of the pattern will generally be better if on a smaller scale than the bolder design of the frontal itself; for the simple reason that it is of lesser importance. Neither is it necessary that it should be of the same colour as the frontal; but it should be such that it will harmonize with all the different coloured frontals in use, since it is undesirable that it should be changed at the different festivals. It is, however, advisable to vary the dorsal with the seasons, and to have a brighter design for festal times, and one of a more ordinary pattern for ferial use, while other colours may be used in Advent and Lent. The top of the dorsal may have an open hem through which the rod can be passed. The rod should be two or three inches longer than the dorsal and the two supporting hooks fixed at a distance, wide enough apart to allow the dorsal to hang between them.

It is better not to spoil the proportions of the dorsal by increasing its height, for

S. Matthew's, Bethnal Green.

Plate 41.

the sake of covering up another twelve or eighteen inches of blank wall-space below the window-sill. There is no objection to a little plain walling being seen ; in fact, it is an improvement rather than otherwise, especially if the wall be whitened. Sometimes there is room for a picture or image above the dorsal and beneath the window.

Wall-hangings

Although it is not always advisable, the rest of the east wall, where there is no wall arcading, panelling, or other decorative treatment, may be provided with hangings. These should be subordinated to the altar-hangings, because the idea must always be to concentrate the attention on the altar and its ornaments. It is better, therefore, to keep the wall-hangings simple in character. If, for example, the frontal and the dorsal are not very rich, it would be better to use a plain coloured hanging, because its simplicity will not

detract from the richness of the altar. But where the altar and its ornaments are very rich, no harm may be done by the use of tapestry hangings, provided that their pattern is small and not too pronounced, so that the wall curtains act as a foil to the altar.

Serge and woollen materials should be avoided on account of their dust-holding quality : linen, on the other hand, forms a most suitable material. The blue linen supplied by the S. Dunstan Society for this purpose, makes an excellent hanging, and most colours will go well with it. The colour selected should generally be in contrast with the colours of the altar-hangings. While the altar-hangings will be but very slightly full, the wall-hangings should be in ample folds. An increase of about fifty per cent. in its length should be allowed in order to provide this fullness.

A convenient way of fixing the wall-hangings is by means of iron tubing, such as is used for gas and water-pipes. The

rods should be in short lengths of about four or six feet, so that the hangings can be easily removed and brushed, or, if of linen, ironed. If the hangings be provided with large open hems the tubing can be passed through them, and slots cut where the brackets which support the rods occur.

The height to which the wall-hangings should be carried will depend very largely on the east wall, as well as on the existence of special architectural features. As these points vary considerably, it is impossible to suggest any definite height. Each case must be decided on its own merits. As far as possible it is advisable to keep the hangings not less than the height of the top of the dorsal. Should there be a string course at a lower level, then an exception will have to be made, and the hangings terminated underneath it. But there are limits to which this reduction in height should be carried. A mere dado of hangings is a mistake, and any space under five feet in height

should be treated in some other manner. Where the string course runs above the level of the top of the dorsal, then again the height will be fixed by this feature, and not by the dorsal. In such case a space will be left between the top of the dorsal and the string. If this space only amounts to about twelve or eighteen inches in height, it will be better to leave it plain. Should it exceed this dimension, then it should be covered with similar wall-hangings, rather than increase the height of the dorsal itself, since with a high dorsal the good proportions of the altar and its arrangements would be lost.

The hangings should be kept at least an inch off the floor to prevent the harbouring of dust.

Wall-hangings are sometimes overdone. In a well-designed chancel with white distempered walls they can be dispensed with altogether. Nothing will show up the colouring of the altar and dorsal and the stained glass of the east window

above them so well as whitened walls. The white distemper, however, may be slightly toned or broken by the addition of a little lamp-black and yellow ochre in order to produce a parchment tint : but very little of these materials will be required in large towns, since the atmosphere soon relieves the distemper of any freshness.

Riddels

The furnishing of the altar with dorsal alone is extremely simple, and will be greatly improved by the addition of side hangings or "wings." These are the "riddels" of the mediæval period, already described, which it will be better to call by their proper name. Extraordinary things have been done with them in some of our modern churches ; they have been fixed at all kinds of levels, above the top of the dorsal and below it ; and at all sorts of angles. The material of which they have been made has neither been the

same as that of the dorsal nor as that of the wall-hangings. There was indeed no guiding principle in the arrangement, and the results have, therefore, been most strange and ugly.

It should be remembered that the riddels had their origin in the hangings of the ciborium, and not in the wings of a triptych. From the liturgical point of view, they ought, therefore, to be fixed at the same level as the dorsal as well as at right angles to it. This is, moreover, the only artistic and satisfactory way of arranging them. They should not touch the ends of the altar, but should have a clear space of about three to six inches between.

For fixing them an iron rod, five-eights or three-quarters of an inch in diameter, is all that will be required. The wall-end should be turned down at right angles and passed through a couple of screw-eyes fixed to a wood-block attached to the wall. The outer end can be simply finished or else may be provided with a sconce and

holder for a candle. The riddels may be suspended on the rods as described for the dorsal, or a little variety may be introduced by hanging them by means of interlaced cords. The iron rods, in this case, since they will be exposed to view, may be gilt.

The material of the riddels, generally, should be similar to that used for the dorsal. It should be lined with a plain bright colour (such as red linen), because if the riddels are properly placed at right angles to the east wall, the lining supplies an effective touch of colour from many points of view.

The beauty of the dorsal and riddels will often be greatly improved by the introduction of posts or pillars to carry them. The pillars may be of wood or metal, but the former is the more convenient for the purpose. If the proportions suggested for the height of the altar and of the dorsal be adopted, the posts can be made about seven feet high. On the top

of the pillars in mediæval times there were sometimes figures bearing candles, but they are not essential, and it is quite possible to dispense with them and to convert the caps into sconces with candle-holders (Plate 40).

If wood be the material used, a hard wood like oak, or teak in hot countries, will be found very suitable for the purpose. The wood may be left either in its natural colour or else fumed to a darker tint. But nothing will add so much to its richness as gilding. The effect of the gold against the colouring of the hangings is exceedingly beautiful, and is well worth the extra expense. Although the wood would be completely covered by the gilding, it should still be of oak, because its figuring is perceptible below gilding, and prevents the dead appearance so often seen where a closer-grained material is used.

Where economy is of very great importance, painted pine may be used instead of

Photo] [*Cyril Ellis.*

A NINETEENTH-CENTURY SANCTUARY. (See page 167.)

oak, but great care should be taken in the selection of the colour of the paint, in view of the fact that it will have to harmonize with the colours of the frontal and hangings.

Reredos

If a reredos be substituted for the dorsal both the riddels and their pillars should be retained. Like the dorsal, the place of which it fills, its object is to add dignity to the altar; the proportions, therefore, already given for the one will apply also to the other. In too many of our churches where this object has been lost sight of, the most prominent feature, and one that immediately catches the eye, is not the altar, but the reredos. As a piece of workmanship, and of artistic skill and craftmanship, it may be beyond criticism, but if that be the all in all of its introduction into the sanctuary, then it has failed in its primary object.

As the reredos should thus be com-

paratively small, it should be rich in design and colour. Wood is, perhaps, the most suitable material to use, since it can be so easily decorated with colour and gilding. Stone is cold-looking and lacks the warmth of colour which is so necessary in a dull climate ; although stone-work, if properly prepared, can be similarly decorated. The design may be either a single sculptured panel in low relief, or else a series of panels ; but the sculpture should be the design and work of a real artist. A series of rich tabernacled work, with the niches filled with images, makes an effective reredos. Painted subjects may take the place of sculpture and images. Plain traceried panelling will make a simple and unpretentious reredos. Large gablets and pinnacles do not, as a rule, look happy, and should be avoided. The reredos lends itself to a variety of treatment, and, subject to general directions, should be left to the artist to design unhampered by too detailed instructions.

CHAPTER XI

Altar Rails, Sedilia, Piscina, and Credence Table

Altar Rails

ALTAR rails, now so general in our churches, appear to date from Reformation times. So long as our mediæval churches had chancel-screens there was no need for any additional protection of the altar. Probably, at the time of Communion, kneeling-benches were provided for the infirm and aged, while the other communicants were content to kneel on the paving or step.[1] When the chancel-screens were removed, there

[1] Such rail-like benches may be seen in sixteenth-century Continental pictures.

ERMINGTON, DEVON : ALTAR RAIL.
(See page 172.)

was left no protection to the altar, and rails were introduced in order to fence the holy table.

Their position appears to have been a few feet in front of the footpace, and at the entrance to the sanctuary. Sometimes they extended across the sanctuary from the north to the south wall, although the more usual arrangement was to enclose the altar on three sides. Many examples of these three-sided rails are to be found in unrestored churches throughout the kingdom. In Puritan times, when the altar was permanently removed from its original position against the east wall of the sanctuary, all four sides were sometimes enclosed by rails.[1] An example of this arrangement may be seen in Langley Chapel, Shropshire, where the altar-rails

[1] This arrangement was not in itself Puritan, although adopted by Puritans. Before the French Revolution it existed in one of the chief churches of Christendom, viz., Lyons Cathedral, the *Prima Sedes Galliarum*.

are more like desks than rails. At St. Osyth, in Essex, there used to be a four-sided rail.

The rail was generally made of wood, consisting of a sill with balusters supporting a top rail or capping (Plate 43). The design was in accordance with the architectural style of the period, with the balusters turned or fluted and twisted like the staircase balusters of Renaissance work. In height the rails varied from 2 ft. to 2 ft. 6 ins.

Though their purpose may have been primarily intended to protect the altar from irreverence, (Bishop Wren, for example, ordered the pillars or balusters to be so thick that dogs may not get in); yet they were also intended to serve as communicants' rails.

Altar rails are now regarded almost as necessary as nave pews are, though their purpose is no longer to keep out dogs, but merely to afford relief to communicants.

Photo] [*J. G. Commin.*

WOODBURY, DEVON: JACOBEAN ALTAR RAILS.

Plate 44.

Some attention should be given to their position and arrangement, since both the choir and the sanctuary are affected by their introduction.

The usual and most convenient position for them is within the sanctuary and near the step at the entrance thereto. The rail should not be fixed on the edge of the step, when there are two steps; but should be set back at least fourteen inches from the riser of the upper step, in order to allow sufficient space upon which the communicants may kneel. In many churches this has not been done, despite the fact that attention has been called to this defect over and over again, with the result that the communicants are kneeling on a lower level than that on which the celebrant and deacon stand when administering. This lays a great physical task on the administrants, by reason of the constant bending over. The aim should be to raise the communicants rather than to lower them.

Where an additional nine inches can be spared in the length of the sanctuary this is best done by setting the rails about two feet eastwards from the front edge of the sanctuary-step, and by providing a raised kneeling platform attached to the rails. If this were done it would be unnecessary to fix the rails to the paving, since the kneeling-platform would form sufficient base for their support. Moreover, it would be possible to shift them westwards when more room was required in the sanctuary and when they were not needed for the use of communicants.

The position of the rails with regard to the footpace and its attendant steps has already been considered. A clear space of not less than five feet is required between the sanctuary-step and the eastern end of the choir stalls, in order to allow an orderly arrangement for the approach and return of the communicants. In a large church there should also be provided outlets at both the north and south ends

of this space for the return of the communicants, in order to avoid any confusion with those approaching the altar by the centre gangway of the choir. These openings in the north and south walls are also necessary at other times for the clergy and servers as well as for the choir.

The height of the old rails was generally about 2 ft. 6 ins., but this cannot be regarded as convenient or comfortable. It will be found more satisfactory if they were made about 2 ft. 2 ins. or 2 ft. 3 ins. above the kneeling level.

For material either wood, marble, or metal may be used. Metal work, especially if it be of brass, requires a large amount of attention in the way of cleaning. One is somewhat prejudiced against its use by the usual type of rail and its standards supplied by the advertising church furnishers, although there is no reason why good designs should not be produced. Marble has the advantage of being easily cleaned, but, on the other hand, it has the appear-

ance of being of too solid a nature to be suitable for the purpose.[1] On the whole, wood seems to be the best material to use, since the happy mean may be struck between the thinness in effect of metal and the solidity of marble. Moreover, woodwork lends itself to a variety of designs.

The top of the rails should be in all cases broad and flat: where the rails themselves are of metal or stone, the top might be of wood. It should be at least five inches wide, and is better wider still, so as to form a rest for the arms of those who cannot kneel without some support.

Sedilia

In the basilicas the benches for the clergy were set around the apse against the circular wall. The bishop's throne or

[1] A magnificent seventeenth-century marble-rail may be seen in S. James's, Piccadilly, where it does not look out of place.

EXETER CATHEDRAL: SEDILIA AND PISCINA.
(See page 180.)

cathedra was placed in the centre. This arrangement agrees with the instruction given in the *Testament of our Lord*, where we read, "Let there be a throne by the altar; on the right hand and on the left let there be the places of the presbyters." A similar description is given in the *Apostolic Constitutions*. Examples of this arrangement may be seen at S. Clement's, Rome, Torcello, and Parenzo. Probably in the apsidal sanctuaries of our own churches there were similar thrones and benches. Evidence of such an arrangement exists in the Norman apse of Norwich Cathedral, and in the late Norman work in S. Chad's, Stafford.

In mediæval times, when the altar was moved from the chord of the apse and set against the east wall, this position for the clergy seats was no longer possible, and the clergy were removed to the choir. But seats were still required in the sanctuary for those of the clergy who officiated at the altar. These were provided for them

on the south side of the sanctuary, and are known by the term sedilia. The simplest form consisted of a recess in the wall, with a stone seat ; and this, no doubt, had its origin in the stone bench which ran around the sanctuary-wall, or rather it may be regarded as a remnant after the rest had been removed. Later on, the recess was enriched and the bench partitioned by means of piers or shafts. Sometimes the seats were adorned with canopies (Plate 45). A distinction was also made in the levels of the bench ; the eastern-most, which was occupied by the celebrant, was raised above the adjoining deacon's seat, while that again was at a higher level than the sub-deacon's. Later examples show a reversion to the unbroken level seat : this may have been due to the uncomfortable height at which one or two of the seats were fixed in order to produce the difference in levels. The usual number of seats provided was three, but single sediles are found, as well as examples in

which provision is made for four or even five occupants, as at Maidstone.

Sedilia are still necessary adjuncts to a sanctuary. Provision should be made for three ministers in large churches, and in small churches for two, since the celebrant should not be left unattended. It is quite unnecessary to retain stone as the material for the actual seat; a wooden seat is much more comfortable to the occupants. Neither is it necessary to vary the levels unless the arrangement of the sanctuary-steps requires the modification. But a slight variation of height or ornament in the actual seat might be made, so as to ensure the continuance of the traditional use of the celebrant sitting in the eastern-most.

The Piscina

In the south wall, eastwards of the sedilia, there is usually to be found in mediæval churches a small recess or niche with the sill dished and pierced to form

WARFIELD, BERKS: SEDILIA AND PISCINA.

a bowl with a drain, and sometimes two such bowls. This is the piscina. It was intended to be a sink to receive the water after the *lavabo* or washing of the celebrant's fingers, and, under certain circumstances, the ablutions of the chalice: it was drained direct into the earth.[1] Originally the piscina was made in the paving of the floor to the south of the altar, but only one or two examples of these remain. A second piscina at a later date was provided to receive the washings of the chalice; but when it became customary for the celebrant to consume these, the second piscina was no longer necessary, and none was provided in the later buildings.

Every church, and nearly every altar in the church had its piscina. In many ancient churches piscinæ belonging to side-altars are still to be found, although

[1] In Scotland there are examples with spouts discharging into the churchyard, as at Corstorphine and Guthrie.

the altars themselves have long since disappeared.

The practice of the *lavabo* continued long after the Reformation, and reference to it may be found in contemporary writings. We may therefore conclude that the piscina itself continued to be used in post-Reformation times.

It is still advisable that a piscina should be provided in every sanctuary or chapel where there is an altar. It should be placed on the south side, since that is the most convenient position for it. The vestry or sacristry should also be furnished with one, as it will be found useful when the vessels are cleansed. The waste-pipe should be carried into a dry well below the ground.

The Credence Table

The credence table is of post-Reformation date. In mediæval times a shelf was often fixed above the sill in the piscina-

EXETER CATHEDRAL: PISCINA.
(See page 186.)

recess, on which were placed the cruets, etc. (Plate 47). Generally these shelves were of stone, and many of them still remain. Occasionally they were of wood, but these have perished, and only the grooves remain to mark their position. In the majority of cases these shelves were small, the reason probably being that at a High Mass in a large church one of the side altars was used as a credence table at which the chalice was prepared. At a low Celebration the south end of the altar was used for preparing the elements, as in the Dominican rite at the present day. But in some districts, particularly in Scotland, a large niche in the wall seems to have been used as a credence.

A modern credence may either take the form of a recess, or be a movable table. The recess has the advantage that it is out of the way, and this is very desirable in a narrow or small sanctuary ; but, on the other hand, it is not suitable if the elements are prepared at the credence table instead

of at the altar : a table for this purpose will be found far more convenient. The table should be in size about twenty-one to twenty-seven inches in length and from twelve to fifteen inches in depth. Hard wood, such as oak, should be used.

CHAPTER XII

The Place for the Reserved Sacrament

ALTHOUGH there is a rubric at the end of the Communion Service which directs that if any of the Sacrament remain "of that which was consecrated, it shall not be carried out of the church," the history of this direction shows that it was inserted by High Churchmen in 1662 to prevent irreverent misuse of the Sacred Elements, and not to forbid their being taken to the sick and infirm. At the present day such reservation of the Blessed Sacrament for the sick is sanctioned by some English bishops, and therefore it is necessary to make proper provision for it. In Scotland the practice has gone on unquestioned at least since early in the

eighteenth century ; and elsewhere in the Anglican Communion it is also common and unquestioned.

In primitive times the Eucharist was reserved in some secret place. Later, it became customary to suspend it in a rich vessel beneath the ciborium canopy, or else to place it in a receptacle called a Sacrament-house in the sanctuary-wall of the sacristy.

The hanging pyx beneath the tent-like canopy, which was suspended above the high altar in many of our English parish churches, has already been alluded to. This is clearly the arrangement which is most strictly in accordance with the principles of the Book of Common Prayer. For if we are authorized to reserve the Eucharist, we naturally turn to the Ornaments Rubric as our authority for the vessel and place wherein to reserve. And at the time to which the rubric refers the usual method was in the pyx hanging over the altar.

In some chancels this method might still be practised. The canopy may be suspended from the roof, or, in the case of a smaller one, from a bracket attached to the mullions of the east window. The pyx itself for carrying to the sick fits into a cup, which hangs under the canopy enveloped in a veil called the pyx-cloth. Sometimes the canopy is dispensed with, and sometimes a hanging tabernacle to contain the pyx may take its place. But in all cases the cord, or thin wire rope, or chain, by which the pyx hangs, should pass by means of pulleys, in a way invisible to the eye, to some concealed locker in the wall, where the end may be kept secure under lock and key. Modern circumstances and dangers make some such provision as this a necessity. And the same circumstances may often make it advisable to adopt another arrangement altogether instead of the hanging pyx.

Though practically universal in England, common in the north of France, and also

found elsewhere, the hanging pyx was not the only method of reservation known to Gothic builders. In most of the Teutonic parts of Europe, in the Netherlands, and also in Portugal and in parts of Italy and France, the Blessed Sacrament was reserved in a more or less elaborate aumbry or locker in the sanctuary-wall on the north side of the altar. This method was also more characteristic of Scotland than the suspended pyx. It is still called the "Sacrament house" in Germany, where it is in common use to-day. The English canonist, Lyndwood, prefers it to the hanging pyx, and it seems to have been not unknown in England. For modern requirements the Sacrament-house is more convenient, and there is nothing to be said against its legality. It should be in the wall on the north side of the sanctuary; preferably the north wall, although these structures are sometimes found in the northern part of the east wall. The many examples remaining in Scotland, mostly between the

Tay and the Moray Firth, form excellent models, though the design of the Sacrament-house is capable of infinite variation. For example, the structure may project from the wall, or may be carried on a shaft, and it may be crowned with a tall spirelet. In Germany and the Netherlands Sacrament-houses became so elaborate that they were built as separate structures independent of the wall.

The Sacrament-house, whether elaborate or simple, must, like all aumbries in the wall, be so constructed as to be free from damp. It is advisable to have a steel safe sunk in the wall, lined internally with wood, which should be gilt or covered with silk. There may be an inner as well as an outer door, and the latter may be single or double. Some arrangement should be made so that, if desired, a curtain or veil may be hung before the door.

Although it was the practice throughout Great Britain to reserve near the high altar, nowadays, where diocesan rules so require,

it may be necessary to provide for either hanging pyx or Sacrament-house in a side chapel, which was indeed anciently the usual place of reservation in our cathedral churches. Reservation is only permitted in the church, or in a building attached to and forming a part of the church.

The Roman Catholic method of a tabernacle set in the centre of gradines at the back of the altar should not be adopted. It only came into use about the time of the Reformation, and was first ordered in England by the Pope in the reign of Queen Mary, but the order was not obeyed. The tabernacle grew to huge proportions in many Continental churches in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and to such an extent as to deprive the altar of all dignity and beauty. The altar has to be made very narrow in order that the tabernacle may be easily accessible; and it hopelessly breaks up the reredos. Its use favours the erection of shelves, for which ornaments have to be provided;

with the result that the cross and candlesticks are moved from their proper place on the altar to supply these ornaments. This custom necessitated the lifting of the reredos above the row of shelves, and has largely accounted for the increased size of the reredos in order that it may be brought into proportionate relationship to the large tabernacle. Thus the altar, the most important of all the furniture in the sanctuary, lost its prominence, richness and dignity.

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